Scope of the Healthy Workers Initiative

Q: *How are workers defined under the Healthy Workers Initiative?*

A: Workers are defined as individuals of working age currently in paid employment. The primary target age range for the Healthy Workers Initiative is 35 – 55 years. However, workers outside this age range will not be excluded.

Q: *Are volunteers included under the Healthy Workers Initiative?*

A: While volunteers are not a specific target population under the Initiative, if volunteers are in the workplace they will not be excluded from participating in the Health Check Service or Workplace Support Service.

Q: *What about national employers or employers with a workforce across a number of states and territories?*

A: The intention will be to ensure that where a workforce operates across a number of jurisdictions all employees have access to the Healthy Workers Initiative programs. This may involve inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

Q: *Is workplace stress addressed under the Healthy Workers Initiative?*

A: Mental health is not a performance benchmark for the Healthy worker Initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health (NPAPH). The performance benchmarks relate to the adult lifestyle risk factors of smoking fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity and body weight. The Commonwealth states in their Scoping Statement and Policy Framework that ‘programs may have a mental health element but this should not be the sole focus of the program’.

At this stage, it is anticipated that workplace stress issues will be addressed as part of the Workplace Support Service.
Q: What will happen if workers raise stress as a personal issue during their Health Check?
A: Individual advice related to dealing with stress or other mental health issues will not be given during the Health Check. However, a list of referral services for mental health will be made available to workers who raise these issues.

Targeting of the HWI

Q: How were the first three target industries of road freight transport, housing construction and manufacturing chosen?
A: An analysis of 2007/2008 National Health Survey results, combined with industry data sourced from occupational health and safety bodies across Australia conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers in 2010, found that these three industries are amongst the least healthy industries according to smoking, physical inactivity, weight, nutrition and harmful alcohol consumption indicators. These industries also align with WorkCover NSW’s regional engagement activities.

Q: What industries will be targeted after the first three?
A: The Healthy Workers Initiative is still in the planning and development stage and will soon move to concept testing and piloting of the Health Check Service and the Workplace Support Service. The piloting will provide a wealth of important information about what workers and workplaces think of the services, how well the services are taken up and why, and whether targeting the services by industry is the most appropriate approach.

Health Check Service

Q: Who is eligible to have a Health Check?
A: All NSW workers will have the opportunity to undergo a Health Check over the life of the Healthy Workers Initiative through the participation of their employers. However, in the early stages of the Healthy Workers Initiative implementation, the NSW Government wants to target the Health Check to those workers in industries with a higher risk of developing a lifestyle related chronic disease. Early implementation will be focused on the following industries: Housing Construction; Manufacturing and Road Freight Transport.

Q: Can a worker access Health Checks more than once?
A: No. The NSW Government wants all NSW workers to have the opportunity to undergo a Health Check through the participation of their employers. For this reason, the Health Check will be limited to one per worker.
Q: Who will perform the Health Checks?

A: Qualified health professionals will deliver the Health Checks. The precise level of qualification will be determined based on further consultation with the Clinical Advisory Panel which has been established for the Healthy Workers Initiative.

Q: What happens to the results of an individual's Health Check?

A: The confidentiality of results is extremely important. No identifying information will be given to employers or Workcover NSW.

In larger workplaces, where more than 50 workers have Health Checks, employers will receive a summary of results only. Summaries will not contain details that could identify individuals. An example of the information an employer will receive is that 30 per cent of their workforce are smokers.

To help employers better understand and plan how they can support their workers to achieve a healthier lifestyle, this type of information integrated with the results of a workplace audit will form part of the Workplace Support Service.

Some de-identified Health Check data will be used to monitor the performance of the program. NSW is currently investigating the feasibility of conducting a study to which individual workers will be invited to participate. Ethics approval would be obtained to conduct such a study.

Q: What about privacy?

A: The Health Check will be as ‘user friendly’ as possible. Workers will be given the Health Check questionnaire prior so they can respond in their own time in privacy.

Health Checks will be delivered in an area that allows for privacy. If a workplace does not allow for this, the Health Check can be delivered at a venue where privacy can be assured.

Q. Will workers have to take their clothes off for the Health Check?

A. The only physical measurement that will be taken as part of the Health Check is a waist circumference measurement that is taken over the top of light clothing - so workers will not be required to take their clothes off down to the skin. While some workers are uncomfortable about having a waist measure taken, the Victorian experience indicates that workers seem to be less concerned with a waist measure than a weight measure taken on a set of scales.
Q: What steps will be taken to encourage a worker to act on advice and referrals given?

A: There is a risk that a worker given the phone number of a follow up referral service such as the Get Healthy Service, local GP or Quitline will not take that next step and contact the service.

To support workers at medium risk of diabetes (according to their Health Check results) to take that next step, the Health Check provider will seek the worker’s consent for the Get Healthy Service to make phone contact with the worker. This will occur two weeks after the Health Check has occurred.

For those workers at high risk of diabetes, the same consent process will occur with referral to the Diabetes Prevention Module of the Get Healthy Service. The worker will also be given a GP referral letter and provided with a list of GPs in their area. When the worker has their first phone contact with the Get Healthy Service they will be asked if they have made an appointment with their GP and if not, encouraged to do so.

For those workers who are smokers they will be asked permission for the Quitline to provide follow up phone contact.

Q: What about workers who spend the majority of their working time away from base eg. on building sites or driving trucks? How will they receive a Health Check?

A: The Healthy Workers Initiative is still in the planning and development stage. We are looking to commission a qualified agency to undertake an industry analysis to help us to better understand the industries being targeted so that we have high uptake of the services available. This would include research to better understand the nature of different industries and their working environments to ensure service delivery is appropriate and accessible.

We are also intending to commission a qualified agency to develop a business engagement and communication strategy to ensure the Initiative is marketed and communicated in a way in which enhances uptake of the services available. Some options for service provision might include using a mobile service to deliver Health Checks to workers on building sites or partnering with roadside diners to deliver Health Checks to road freight transport operators.

Workplace Support Service

Q: There is currently a range of healthy workplace resources publicly available. How will the Healthy Workers Initiative link in with these resources?

A: A number of non-government organisations have developed healthy workplace resources for businesses and many workplaces and industries have invested in workplace health promotion. These are excellent resources which can be used as a platform for linking to the Health Check Service and Workplace Support Service.
Alcohol

Q. Will workers be assessed for alcohol consumption during the Health Check?

A: We are aware that alcohol consumption is a particularly sensitive issue in many industries and workplaces. However, excessive drinking is a significant health risk for chronic disease and the reduction of harmful and hazardous consumption of alcohol is a key outcome under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. The *NSW 2021* (State Plan) also contains a commitment to reducing risk drinking to below 25% by 2015.

Omission of alcohol in the Health Check is undesirable because it may contribute to normalising alcohol consumption (e.g. ‘it can’t be so bad if they didn’t ask me about it’).

The Health Check Service will be completely voluntary for workers and will include significant consent and confidentiality procedures. It will not involve taking blood or urine samples and is not linked to a workplace’s performance management frameworks.

The proposed Health Check Service is similar to the WorkHealth Check operated by WorkSafe Victoria since 2009. Its service providers have conducted over 500,000 WorkHealth Checks since 2009, representing 1 in 5 workers in Victoria.

Consistent with the WorkHealth Check in Victoria, there are two questions on alcohol intake in the NSW Healthy Worker Initiative Health Check questionnaire, which will be tested during concept testing and piloting, and further explored with key stakeholders.

In larger workplaces, where more than 50 workers have Health Checks, employers will receive a summary of results, but this will not contain any information on alcohol consumption of their workers. This is consistent with the approach taken in Victoria.

Q: How is alcohol addressed in the brief intervention?

A: The brief intervention on alcohol provided to workers following the Health Check covers general information only, such as safe levels of alcohol intake as recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council. A worker’s specific responses to the alcohol questions in the questionnaire are not recorded in their results booklet. A worker can also choose not to answer the alcohol consumption questions.

A list of additional free help and information related to drug and alcohol is also provided in the Health Check participant booklet.

Smoking

Q: Is smoking being addressed in the Healthy Workers Initiative?

A: One of the key outcomes under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health is to reduce the proportion of Australian adults smoking daily to 10% within ten years. The NSW Government through the *NSW 2021* (State Plan) is committed to reducing smoking rates by 3% by 2015 for non-Aboriginal people and by 4% for Aboriginal people. The NSW
Tobacco Strategy 2012-2017 includes a priority area to strengthen efforts to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke in workplaces, public places and other settings. Therefore smoking is a key issue under the Healthy Workers Initiative and will be addressed both as part of the Health Check Service and the Workplace Support Service.

Q: How will smoking be addressed in the Health Check Service?

A: Under the Health Check Service, the worker will be asked whether they currently smoke cigarettes or any other tobacco products on a daily basis (as part of the AUSDRISK) and then asked additional questions to identify occasional smoking and recent quitters to promote/reinforce desirable behaviour. A brief intervention based on the NSW Health Let’s Take a Moment brief smoking intervention will be tested during concept testing and piloting and referral will be to the NSW Quitline and/or icanquit website. Generic information on the health benefits of quitting smoking and other contact points will be provided through the brief intervention.

Q: How will smoking be addressed in the Workplace Support Service?

A: The goal of the Workplace Support Service is to increase the number of workplaces that support workers to reduce their risk of lifestyle-related chronic disease including smoking.

The Workplace Support Service will assist businesses to develop a tailored action plan for the workplace. This may include support to workplaces to develop and implement their own smoke-free workplace policies. This is consistent with the NSW Tobacco Strategy 2012-2017 which contains a commitment under the priority area “Second-hand smoke” to develop and implement guidelines and other resources for workplaces and other settings wishing to go smoke-free under the Healthy Workers Initiative.

Equity

Q: What about equity issues?

A: In regards to equity, the Healthy Workers Initiative specifically prioritises workers in rural and regional locations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and populations from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. To enhance equitable access to the program it will also target those businesses which are unlikely to have the financial capability to provide their own healthy workplace programs.

An Equity Analysis and Strategy will be conducted to help ensure that equity issues including the barriers, enablers and needs of Aboriginal employees as well as other identified vulnerable population groups are identified and appropriately addressed across the NSW Healthy Workers Initiative. This includes ensuring that the manner in which activities are designed and delivered is appropriate and relevant to those specific populations identified.
Impacts on business

Q: How much will it cost businesses to be involved in the Initiative in terms of dollars and time?

A: The potential rewards for businesses who participate in the Healthy Workers Initiative are significant. Improving the overall health of workers can result in improved worker productivity and reductions in costs associated with absenteeism and work related injury.

Businesses will not have to pay for their staff to use the Health Check Service or for the Workplace Support Service. It is expected that each Health Check will take around 15 minutes per employee, which is a very small amount of time compared to the adult working life. The duration of the Health Check will be tested during concept testing and piloting. For the Workplace Support Service, the general rule of thumb is that the more time management invests, the greater the long terms benefits to the business in terms of increased productivity and reduced absenteeism.

Economic evaluation, including cost effectiveness analysis, will also be included in the evaluation design of the Healthy Workers Initiative.

Workplace accreditation and employer Incentives

Q: Will there be an accreditation or rewards system for workplaces?

A: The Commonwealth Government has made a commitment to develop a national healthy workplace charter with peak employer groups and a quality framework for health promotion programs in workplaces.

Earlier this year in March, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency launched the inaugural National Preventive Health Awards, including the Healthy Workplace Awards. These are national awards for best practice in workplace health programs.

At a state level, NSW is considering the integration of Healthy Workplace Awards into the WorkCover Safework Awards program, which is currently in operation, to recognise best practice in workplace health programs across NSW.

Q: Will there be any incentives to encourage workplace participation in the Healthy Workers Initiative?

A: Under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, healthy living programs delivered in workplaces may include the provision of incentives either directly or indirectly to employers.

The NSW Government currently provides grant and rebate schemes under certain circumstances. Similar schemes are being investigated for application in the Healthy Workers Initiative.
Evaluation of the HWI

Q: How will the Healthy Workers Initiative be evaluated and will there be an economic evaluation?

A: The Healthy Workers Initiative will be evaluated at a national and state level. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency has commissioned ARTD Consultants, in partnership with the Prevention Research Collaboration, University of Sydney to undertake the National Evaluation of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health (NPAPH), of which the Healthy Workers Initiative is a component. Some of the key questions that the national evaluation will cover include:

- Overall how appropriate was the NPAPH as a national investment in preventive health?
- How effective was the NPAPH in delivering programs to build foundations for healthy behaviours?
- Overall how has the NPAPH contributed to the long term outcomes of increased national capacity for the preventive health effort and sustained improvements in health risk behaviours?

Program evaluation of the Healthy Workers Initiative at a state level will be conducted on the basis of a cascading model that includes population health outcomes, program impacts and process indicators of program quality and fidelity. Economic evaluation, including cost effectiveness analysis, will also be included in the evaluation design.

Q: Has the Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service been evaluated?

A: Evaluation of the Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service has shown positive results, demonstrating that the Service is successful at supporting people to make positive changes to their health and lifestyle. Adults who have completed the six month coaching program to date have lost an average of 4 kg and 4.9 cm from their waist. Other achievements among adults who have completed the six month coaching program include: an increase in the serves of vegetables consumed daily; a decrease in the amount of take away meals consumed per week; and an increase in physical activity levels.