

FREE GUIDE · NO EMAIL REQUIRED

The Australian business owner's guide to WHS compliance

What the law actually asks of you as a director, the five gaps that catch small businesses out, and the simple routine that keeps you covered.

Written in plain English, not legalese.

1. YOUR PERSONAL LIABILITY

Under the WHS Act, the duty sits with you — not your paperwork

Directors, partners and senior managers are “Officers” under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. That brings a duty of due diligence you cannot delegate away.

- ✓ “I didn’t know” is not a defence — an Officer is expected to actively acquire knowledge of WHS matters.
- ✓ You must be able to show you consulted workers, assessed risks and resourced controls — with dates.
- ✓ WHS penalties against individuals cannot be insured against in Australia.
- ✓ A signed, timestamped record is what turns good intentions into evidence.

The practical test: if a regulator asked today, could you produce dated proof of your last risk assessment, toolbox talk and contractor insurance check within ten minutes? If not, that is the gap.

2. THE FIVE BLIND SPOTS

Where small businesses actually get caught

These are the issues we find again and again in Health Checks — rarely because anyone was careless, usually because nobody owned them.



Uninsured subcontractors

A subbie’s public liability lapsed six months ago and nobody noticed. If they are hurt or cause damage on your site, the exposure often lands on you.



Documents nobody reads

A generic template pack bought online, never tailored, never signed. In an investigation this can read as worse than having nothing.



Late incident notification

Some incidents must be reported to the regulator immediately and the site left undisturbed. Getting this wrong is a separate offence from the incident itself.



Unrecorded toolbox talks

Safety conversations happen on site every week. Without a sign-on sheet, legally they never happened.



Actions with no owner

A hazard is raised, someone says they will fix it, and three months later it is still open. Overdue actions are the single clearest sign of a system nobody is driving.



Out-of-date documents

Codes of Practice and regulations change. A safe work method statement written three years ago may now reference superseded requirements.

What good looks like — about five minutes a day

HOW OFTEN	WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS
Daily	Workers report hazards and near misses from their phone	Catches the small things before they become claims.
Weekly	A short toolbox talk with digital sign-on	Evidence of consultation, which the Act specifically requires.
Monthly	Review open actions, contractor expiries and training due dates	Stops overdue items quietly piling up.
Quarterly	Site inspection or audit against a checklist	Finds the drift between the written system and real practice.
Yearly	Full document and risk register review	Keeps everything current with changing law.

4. THE THREE WAYS TO RESOURCE IT

What it costs to actually run WHS properly

OPTION	TYPICAL COST	WHAT YOU GET	THE CATCH
Full-time WHS manager	\$110,000–\$150,000 / year plus super	Someone in the business full time.	Out of reach for most small and medium businesses.
Consultant as needed	\$250–\$350 / hour	Expert help when you call.	No system between visits, and the meter is always running.
Template pack	\$200–\$2,000 once	Documents.	Generic, never updated, and nobody maintains it.
Safety Sorted membership	from \$449 / month	An assigned adviser, a live portal, branded documents kept current, and an audit-ready evidence trail.	Best suited to businesses that want the system run for them.

Prices exclude GST. Membership pricing depends on tier and term — see the pricing page for the full comparison.

HOW IT WORKS

Three phases, from first call to a safety routine that runs itself

Tap a phase to see exactly what happens, who does it and how long it takes.

Your adviser does the heavy lifting. You upload a logo, confirm your details and sign off.

1 Health Check & quote

An adviser reviews your business, staff numbers and risks, then matches you to the right membership with a fixed monthly price.

2 Profile & logo

Add your ABN, sites and logo. Every document we issue is branded as yours from that moment on.

3 Document rollout

Your core policies, procedures, SWMS and emergency plans are issued to your portal. You review and sign on your phone.

4 Site QR codes

Print your site code for the crib room or ute. Workers report hazards without needing a login.

5 Contractor links

Send your upload link to subbies. They submit their insurances and licences themselves.

The bit that usually fails in other systems: getting workers to actually report things.

1 Scan and report

A worker scans the site code, snaps a photo and describes the hazard. Under a minute, no app to install.

2 Automatic risk rating

Every hazard gets a 5×5 likelihood × consequence rating, so the serious ones stand out from the noise.

3 Notifiable incident triage

Three plain-English questions decide if SafeWork must be called. If so, you get the 13 10 50 prompt and site preservation steps immediately.

4 Chemicals on hand

Safety Data Sheets are searchable on a phone, so first aid and handling advice is there when it is needed.

A steady routine that leaves a timestamped trail behind it.

1 Toolbox talks

Scheduled topics with digital sign-on from the crew. The planner rolls the next date forward for you.

2 Action tracker

One list of everything owed across incidents, inspections and audits, filtered by overdue, due this week or high priority.

3 Monthly summary

A one-page branded report of incidents, actions, talks and contractor status for your management meeting.

4 Safety Credits

Use your yearly credits on what you actually need — a training session, a tender response, a new SWMS.

5 Evidence Pack

If an auditor, insurer or head contractor asks, export the whole timestamped record as a PDF, spreadsheet or file bundle.