



2024 GERI Report The Australian Injury Prevention State of Play



Research study commissioned by



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Introduction



The objective of this report is to demonstrate the critical need for collaboration between the injury and EHS functions, emphasising both the reasons and methods for deeper cooperation. It aims to highlight how leveraging technology and data can facilitate this partnership, enabling organisations to achieve comprehensive injury prevention outcomes that are currently beyond their reach.

Additionally, the report aims to help the C-suite comprehend the significance of this collaboration, recognising their role as pivotal influencers in driving this essential change. The convergence of injury management and EHS practices is no longer optional; it is essential. As managing risk, preventing injuries, and simplifying operational complexity become the minimum standards for organisational survival, this collaboration is imperative for sustaining and advancing business success.

In the third quarter of 2024, Focus Network and HSI Donesafe conducted a survey of 156 injury management and EHS leaders, in Australia, to understand the convergence of injury management with EHS, and to provide recommendations for improving injury management outcomes.

The report details the findings from the survey. It uses these findings to provide insights on injury management programs and effective strategies for continuous improvement. The report also highlights the benefits of the convergence of EHS and injury management.

Ultimately, the research findings highlight the increasing benefits of shifting injury management from a siloed function to one that is integrated with wider EHS activities, underpinned by technology and driven by real-time data insights.

The report structure includes an executive summary which offers analysis of the main survey insights. The report then discusses business drivers and challenges for EHS and injury integration, and details the growing importance of interconnectivity and data analysis for the injury management function. The main body of the report shares key research insights, technology maturity data and analysis, and recommendations on how to achieve greater convergence between EHS, HR and injury management. Ultimately, the report highlights how this convergence leads to injury prevention (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: The Convergence of HR, Injury Management and Overall EHS



Executive Summary

The interplay between safety and injury management is critical for optimising overall EHS outcomes. Data derived from one element of EHS can be shared with others to prevent injuries from occurring and to ensure a rapid return to work when injuries occur. Focus Network reveals that only 14% of organisations in Australia consider their EHS and injury management functions to be fully aligned.

The cost of injuries in terms of compensation and delayed return to work is increasing, particularly with tightened regulations around mental health. Indeed, 25% of organisations in Australia consider mental health as the leading area for improvement to injury management programs. According to Safe Work Australia the cost of mental health injuries is much higher than for other injuries.



The median time lost from work for mental health conditions is 34.2 working weeks and the median compensation paid is \$58,615. For all other claims the median time lost from work is 5.4 working weeks and the median compensation paid is \$12,547. This is creating an urgent need to integrate EHS activities, including injury management so as insights can be shared, and injuries prevented. Furthermore, it is creating a need to integrate with other organisational functions such as HR to derive additional data that is relevant to mental health. For example, HR holds data on absenteeism which is a leading indicator for mental health.

Technology plays a key role in enabling greater integration of EHS activities with injury management. Focus Network research shows that 40% of organisations are at an immature state, in terms of technology usage and adoption, for their injury management programs. In these organisations, pen and paper, spreadsheets and customised forms and tools, are widely used. There is limited or no integration with the wider EHS ecosystem. Despite this, 68% of injury and safety leaders recognise that new EHS and injury management technologies can reduce overall EHS risk, reduce workplace injuries and incidents, and lower workers' compensation costs.

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Andrew Milroy, Head of Research at Focus Network said "Despite closer integration between injury management and other EHS activities at an organisational level, integrating technology systems between the functions is lagging."

Over 50% of injury and safety leaders reveal that their safety and injury technology is minimally integrated or not integrated at all. This indicates that there is a huge opportunity for these leaders to benefit from further integration. Moreover, these leaders state that the integration of safety and injury management technologies creates direct benefits in terms of injury management outcomes. 46% benefit from reduced administrative burden as a result of the integration of safety and injury technology, with 43% and 38% witnessing improved data accuracy and consistency; and faster response times to incidents, respectively.

According to Kylie Fraser, Director of Safety, Security and Wellbeing at McDonald's, "If injury management is not integrated, we miss a huge wealth of knowledge. Having a single source of truth is essential. We'd be totally lost without it."

The integration of EHS and injury management technologies allows the injury management function to utilise multiple data sources to prevent injuries and improve overall EHS outcomes. Specifically, it enables it to use leading and lagging indicators to drive improved outcomes. Only 20% of injury and EHS leaders believe that their organisation uses data to improve injury management outcomes significantly or extensively.

Figure 2 highlights the three main gaps in injury management programs. These gaps emerge as key themes throughout this report.

Figure 2 – Major Gaps in Injury Management Programs



Obtaining greater engagement among stakeholders including the adoption of new technology, addressing mental health injuries and benefitting from data and technology integration will all lead to improved injury management outcomes.

According to Josh Maxwell, Director of WHS, Risk and Security at Waveconn, "We need more education about injury management at board level. They need to understand that it is strategic and about preventing injuries and what you do post injury."

Indeed, significant opportunities exist through collaboration, and unification between safety and injury functions, that impact prevention outcomes. Establishing a common data framework between these two functions can help uncover critical blind spots and refine processes.



Key Drivers for EHS and Injury Management Integration

Injury management and EHS functions are converging due to the growing recognition of the interconnected nature of workplace safety and health, driven by rising costs, regulatory demands, and the need for comprehensive risk management.

Focus Network has identified 14 key drivers that have played a critical role in accelerating this convergence. This rapid convergence is putting increasing pressure on these functions to collaborate deeply, change their ways of collaboration, and move towards injury prevention as a priority. Technological modernisation is a significant enabler, facilitating proactive safety measures and real-time monitoring while simplifying operational complexity, making it imperative for these functions to evolve and enhance prevention outcomes.



Regulatory Compliance and

Unified approach to proactive risk management

Aligning injury management with EHS allows for a holistic approach to risk management. Integrated systems can identify potential hazards earlier, streamline reporting, and ensure consistent application of safety protocols across the organisation.

Shift towards proactive and holistic strategies

Regulatory bodies increasingly mandate comprehensive approaches to workplace health and safety, encompassing both injury management and wider EHS. Compliance with these regulations requires seamless collaboration to ensure that all safety measures are up-to-date and effectively implemented.

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Data-Driven Decision Making and Action

Legal Requirements

Leveraging integrated data to respond in real-time

Combining injury management and EHS data with real-time analytics, alerts, and corrective actions enhances workplace safety by identifying trends, predicting risks, and streamlining workflows, enabling proactive rather than reactive measures.

4

Improved Incident Response and Reporting

Move towards comprehensive incident reporting

Effective incident reporting drives deeper investigations, root cause analysis, and correlational insights, proactively preventing injuries through centralised critical controls, corrective actions, and learning management. A unified approach ensures immediate action, reducing recurrence and enhancing workplace safety.



The Interplay between Leading and Lagging Indicators

Importance of leading indicators in injury management

Focusing on leading indicators in EHS helps injury management teams prevent injuries by identifying risks early. Together with lagging indicators, they provide a comprehensive approach to safety, enabling proactive interventions and continuous improvement in injury prevention.

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Prioritising mental health and psychosocial risk

Mental Health and Psychosocial Risk

Addressing mental health and psychological injuries is crucial in modern workplaces. Integrating these aspects into injury management and wider EHS ensures comprehensive support for employees' mental health. This approach helps identify stressors, provides timely interventions, and promotes a supportive work environment, reducing the incidence of psychological injuries.

Early intervention enhances injury prevention and recovery

Early Intervention and Preventive **Strategies**

Early intervention and pre/post-rehabilitation programs improve injury management outcomes, prevent injury severity, and ensure effective recovery. Early detection and prompt treatment reduce recovery times, minimize long-term impacts, and prevent minor issues from becoming severe.

Better Return-to-Work Outcomes

Better integration promotes better Return-to-Work outcomes

Integrating injury management and EHS enhances return-to-work outcomes by enabling tailored job design, continuous monitoring, and adding critical controls to risk libraries, reducing re-injury risks and ensuring comprehensive support for employees, regardless of the injury's origin.

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Changing Workforce Dynamics

Increased collaboration keeps your entire workforce protected

Effective contractor management and EHS collaboration are essential as the workforce expands to include contractors, visitors, remote, and mobile workers. Integrating injury management and EHS ensures comprehensive support and addresses the challenges of a diverse workforce.

Rising Overall Costs to the Business

Reduce incidents, injuries and costs through an integrated approach

Rising costs of workers' compensation, especially from psychological injuries, are driving up business expenses. Converging injury management with EHS can reduce incidents, control costs, and enhance prevention and management strategies.



Self-Insurance demands health & safety and injury convergence

Transitioning to self-insurance increases accountability and necessitates convergence with health and safety, emphasising proactive injury prevention and employee well-being to reduce incident rates and financial risks.



Integrate injury management for a healthier, more resilient workforce

Managing Personal and Work-Related Injuries Organisations are evolving injury management by integrating support for work-related and personal injuries through comprehensive health programs, leveraging early intervention and holistic return-to-work strategies to foster a healthier, more resilient workforce.



Unified systems enable proactive, safer workplaces

Integrated Systems for Injury Management Integrating injury management with HR, payroll, and EHS systems enables comprehensive analysis of triggers, predicts future injuries, and allows proactive interventions, fostering a safer, healthier workplace through better risk assessment and real-time monitoring.



Reduce financial burden by streamlining systems

Cost Efficiency and Savi Resource Optimisation hea

Streamlining processes between injury management and EHS can lead to significant cost savings. Shared resources, reduced duplication of efforts, and improved efficiency in managing health and safety initiatives ultimately reduce the financial burden on the organisation.



Injury Management Improvements

Injury management and EHS leaders are continually searching for ways of improving injury management outcomes, by preventing injuries from occurring in the first place and by ensuring that injuries are addressed effectively. These improvements often address the challenges outlined above by increasing stakeholder engagement, improving mental health outcomes and integrating technology more tightly.

Focus Network research reveals the leading injury management program improvements according to injury management and EHS leaders.

Figure 3 - Injury Management Program Improvements



Getting greater buy-in from the wider organisation emerges as a major issue for injury management and EHS leaders. Improved outcomes require greater stakeholder involvement and an improved understanding of the role and benefits of EHS and injury management.



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Achieving this involvement requires greater awareness and education. Improved organisational awareness and education on injury management emerges as the leading improvement to injury management programs, with 49% of injury management and EHS leaders citing it as a leading improvement.

Healthcare providers in Australia are not always fully aware of injury management processes such as return to work and claims management. For this reason, 32% of injury and EHS leaders cite improved management of healthcare providers as a leading improvement to their programs.

Increasingly, the injury management function leverages data insights for accident prevention. 31% of EHS and injury management leaders view it as a leading improvement for their injury management programs.

The 2023 mental health legislation in Australia, has led to a huge increase in focus on mental health from an injury management perspective. 25% of injury management and EHS leaders consider greater mental health focus to be a leading improvement to their injury management programs

According to Claere Kay, National WHS Manager at Southern Cross Protection, "Returning to work is quickly as possible is the best therapy for mental health issues."

Emphasis needs to be placed on speeding up return to work for employees with mental health conditions.

Streamlined communication between stakeholders emerges as a leading improvement to injury management programs according to 21% of respondents. This helps to break down organisational silos and unify injury management and wider EHS activities.

Engagement and Adoption

One of the key issues that is repeatedly mentioned in Focus Network's research is the need for greater engagement with stakeholders, within the organisation, on injury management processes and strategies. This also drives a need for technologies that can be built into operational processes and cause as little friction as possible to workflows.

Focus Network asked respondents to indicate the perceived engagement level of their organisations' employees for both injury management and wider health and safety programs.

Figure 4 illustrates the engagement levels of employees for injury management and for health and safety programs.



Figure 4- Employee Engagement Levels

In general, employee engagement levels are higher for overall health and safety programs than for injury management programs. Typically, injury management programs tend to be less mature than overall health and safety programs, in terms of technology usage, strategic impact, adoption and engagement and integration into the organisation.

Improving injury management outcomes will require greater convergence with overall health and safety activities as well as greater employee engagement. Technology plays a major role in enabling greater convergence of the injury management function with wider health and safety activities, as well as more effective engagement and adoption of key processes by all stakeholders.

So why invest in new health and safety and injury management technology? For many, it underpins their ability to achieve core health and safety and injury management outcomes. 28% of respondents state that a reduction in workplace incidents and injuries is their main motivator for investing in technology while 20% cite a reduction in overall EHS risk as their main motivator.

Figure 5 illustrates the leading motivators for adopting health and safety and injury management technologies.

Figure 5 – Main Motivators for the Adoption of New Health and Safety and Injury Management Technologies



Technology can also play a role lowering workers' compensation costs and reducing the number of hours spent on administrative tasks. Predictably the cost of technology is a major inhibitor to its adoption.

Figure 6 illustrates the leading obstacles to adopting new health and safety and injury technologies.

Figure 6 – Inhibitors to Technology Adoption



Complexity and integration with existing systems emerge as major inhibitors to technology adoption along with a resistance to change in the organisation. Lack of leadership support and training together with an unclear return on investment also play a role in inhibiting technology adoption.

The Benefits of Integrating Injury Management into the Wider EHS Ecosystem

Only 14% of health and safety and injury management leaders report that their EHS and injury management function are fully aligned.

Figure 7 reveals the perceived level of integration of the EHS and injury management functions.

Figure 7 - EHS and Injury Management Integration Levels



Clearly there is scope for greater integration and alignment of the health and safety and injury management functions. Almost half of Australian organisations report moderate, minimal or no alignment of the functions.

There are multiple barriers that obstruct closer alignment between the EHS and injury functions. These include budget constraints, silos and differing management priorities.

Figure 8 illustrates the leading barriers to closer alignment.

Figure 8 – Barriers to Closer Alignment





Different technology solutions for varying elements of EHS and for injury management make alignment a major challenge. 25% of respondents report technology fragmentation to be a key barrier to greater alignment. Communication silos and a lack of a consolidated strategy are widely cited as barriers to greater alignment and make the convergence of injury management with other EHS processes, much more challenging.

In addressing the challenges of health, safety, and injury management, organisations may adopt different approaches, behaviours, and strategies across various levels of their business. However, a primary distinction significantly influences the effectiveness of these efforts: whether health, safety, and injury are managed in a coherent, collaborative, and integrated manner, or whether silos—ranging from small to large—create gaps that lead to risks, inefficiencies, and blind spots.

An integrated approach ensures that all aspects of EHS and injury management are aligned and working together, whereas siloed management can result in fragmented efforts, undermining overall safety and effectiveness.

Key opportunities stemming from this collaboration include:



Uniting leading and lagging indicators, leveraging connected technology to unveil fresh prevention pathways.



Addressing psychosocial risks across the entire mental health spectrum through early identification, knowledge management, and proactive intervention.



Harnessing emerging technology and unified datasets to transition organisations from reactive cultures to proactive, generative states.

Techology and Data Integration

Technology fragmentation makes it much more difficult to align EHS and injury management, leading to improved outcomes. Spreadsheets and paper-based approaches are still commonly used, particularly in injury management. Indeed, pen and paper are still used by 4% of respondents for injury management.

Figure 9 illustrates technology usage patterns in both health and safety and injury management.



Figure 9 - Technology Usage Patterns

When asked what technologies are used for health and safety and for injury management, there are some significant variations. Injury management is less mature from a technology adoption perspective. From a technology perspective the injury function can benefit more from wider adoption of integrated solutions. Key benefits of integrating EHS and injury management systems include improved data accuracy and consistency and reduced administrative burden.

Figure 10 reveals the key benefits of integrating EHS and injury management systems

Figure 10 - Benefits of Integrating EHS and Injury Management Systems



Collaboration across teams, faster response times and better compliance emerge as key benefits of technology integration. Enhanced predictive analytics, increased employee engagement and improved decision making are also leading benefits.

Lack of technology integration causes to a range of challenges including inconsistent data across systems, delays in incident reporting and response, difficulties with compliance, increased administration, limited ability to perform predictive analytics, poor collaboration, insufficient employee engagement and difficulty in tracking and analysing trends.

Today's rapidly evolving injury management landscape is reshaping program maturity and future readiness. Focus Network research highlights a fundamental workplace operational shift, emphasising data-driven approaches for people-centric outcomes. The symbiotic relationship between leading and lagging indicators drives real-world impact, especially in injury prevention and return-to-work success. This convergence of injury and safety functions is pivotal.

Leveraging data is critical to this transition. Using data to re-design workflows, the workplace, increase awareness, and enhance early intervention, are increasingly becoming core activities for EHS and injury management functions. Both leading and lagging indicators play are role in optimising safety and injury management outcomes and in the convergence of injury and safety.

Focus Network research identifies the most commonly used leading indicators in Figure 11.





For a more summative evaluation of injury management and EHS posture, lagging indicators can be used to drive improved outcomes.

Figure 12 illustrates the most commonly used lagging indicators.

Figure 12 – Commonly Used Lagging Indicators



There are numerous challenges to using data for injury prevention which must be addressed. Poor quality data, a perceived lack of analytics tools and difficult in data integration across systems are highlighted as the leading challenges.

Figure 13 shows the leading challenges due to lack of integration between EHS and injury management systems.

Figure 13 – Leading Challenges from Lack of Integration



Most perceived challenges associated with data utilisation for the EHS and injury management functions can be addressed by using unified systems that share data and enable data to drive decision-making and optimise injury management outcomes.

Only about 20% of respondents believe that their organisations use data to improve EHS and injury management outcomes significantly. There is much room for improvement.



Figure 14 illustrates how effectively respondents believe that their organisations use data to improve EHS and injury management outcomes.





Benchmarking data around the likely compensation costs for certain injuries and projected return to work dates, would add value to the injury management function. Claere Kay, National WHS Manager at Southern Cross Protection gave an example.

"One of our employees fell down a manhole and was diagnosed with a Lisfranc fracture. If, on diagnosis, details of the typical recovery and return to work requirements, for this injury could be shared in our system, we could improve our injury management program."

Injury Management Technology Maturity

Injury management technology maturity is assessed by analysing the use of technology and data to optimise injury management outcomes. Importantly, it also assesses the extent to which injury management and safety technology are converging and sharing data.

Technology maturity considers the digital transformation of the injury management function. An immature state is considered to be one where basic tools like spreadsheets and paper forms are used in the function. A mature state is one in which there is a universal management platform with a centralised data repository across the injury, health and safety and other relevant corporate functions such as HR.

Data maturity is concerned with the extent to which data is used strategically to optimise injury management and health and safety outcomes, with increased efficiency, innovation and productivity, as core goals.

Broadly, four stages of maturity can be defined as follows:

Injury management processes are manual and operate independently of EHS. There is limited digitisation and spreadsheets, emails, customised tools, and paperbased approaches are widely used. The injury management function typically operates in isolation, separate from EHS.

Digital injury management solutions are used extensively and there are multiple point solutions. Integration and data sharing are limited. Basic data management capabilities are typically built into each point solution, but analytics capabilities are weak.

Injury management solutions are integrated with other EHS technology. Data is being shared and used to drive insights and improvements to injury management, often through enhanced early intervention programs.

Full synchronisation of EHS and injury management solutions on one unified

platform. The functions are data driven and data is treated as a strategic asset. Generative AI is used where possible and teams collaborate and share data with other relevant business functions such as HR. Injury management and EHS are also viewed as strategic to the organisation.

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Figure 15 illustrates the stages of injury management technology maturity and the percentage of organisations that are in each stage.

Figure 15: Injury Management Technology Maturity Curve



TECHNOLOGY AND DATA INTEGRATION



Focus Network research reveals that:



40%

of organisations in Australia are at the most immature state of injury management technology deployment. Many use tools such as SharePoint, spreadsheets and email to support their injury management activities.



29%

of organisations in Australia have purchased a software product that addresses their injury management requirements and typically have multiple products operating across the wider EHS ecosystem. There is limited integration and data sharing.



19%

of organisations in Australia have integrated their injury management and safety software products, enabling data sharing to drive insights and prevent injuries.



12%

of organisations in Australia are at the most mature state of injury management technology usage and deployment. Data is held in a centralised repository and there is a unified platform for the management of injury and EHS. Data is leveraged from across the organisation and outside of the organisation, to prevent accidents and optimise overall EHS outcomes.

Key Recommendations For Injury Management & EHS Leaders



Organisations adopt different approaches, behaviours, and strategies across various levels of their business to address the challenges of health, safety, and injury management. However, the leading driver to making these efforts effective at improving – and ultimately optimising outcomes – is the extent to which health, safety, and injury are managed in a coherent, collaborative, and integrated manner. Organisations which have created separate silos for injury management and elements of health and safety, typically create gaps in coverage which can lead to increased risk, inefficiencies and blind spots.

Organisations need to have strategies that are addressed by a vision, combined with a management structure that integrates operational teams and enables collaboration across health and safety and injury functions.

Crucially, organisations need to ensure that their health and safety and injury management processes are digitalised and that the technology enables data sharing between functions. Additionally, the technology should enable the centralisation of health and safety and injury management data and provide visibility across all health and safety, and injury functions. Data needs to be viewed as a strategic asset and drive decision-making across health and safety, and injury functions. Key recommendations for greater convergence of EHS and injury functions include:

1	Ensuring that managers across the organisation can help to manage injury cases and ensure comprehensive care and support. This involves greater awareness of injury management and EHS programs throughout the organisation and greater engagement of stakeholders with injury management and wider EHS processes.
2	Enabling continuous improvement by leveraging data from across the EHS ecosystem to prevent injuries and speed up return to work.
3	Taking a platform-based approach to technology, involving the centralisation of all EHS and injury data and greater visibility across the organisation. This approach will enable both injury and safety functions to collaboratively prevent injuries.
4	Making EHS and injury management core to organisational strategy. Improving outcomes in these domains increases productivity and creates scope for further innovation and insight-sharing across the organisation.
5	Embedding mental health risk management into injury programs . The cost of mental health injuries is, on average higher than the cost of managing physical injuries, so it is critical the leading and lagging indicators, relating to mental health are fully leveraged.

Definition of Injury Management

Injury management involves activities and procedures undertaken or established, to enable workers with a work-related injury or illness to achieve a timely, safe and durable return to/recovery at work.

Effective injury management focuses on early reporting, rehabilitation and return to work strategies to assist the injured worker make an early and safe return to work.

According to Comcare, the purpose of injury management is to help return employees safely back to work following an injury or illness; improve return to work rates; build skill and knowledge about managing injury; and develop ways of improving rehabilitation and early intervention. For most organisations, successful injury management programs also increase efficiency, reduce payouts and reduce premiums.

Key components of injury management include:



This report highlights the benefits of integrating injury management with the wider EHS ecosystem.

Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) is a term that addresses the laws, regulations, programs, policies, and processes that exist to protect the health and safety of employees, the public, and the environment, from the hazards associated with the workplace.

The EHS ecosystem includes a wide variety of activities that relate to health, safety and the environment. Usually, these activities are focused on the workforce including contractors and sometimes subcontractors, but they can also include customer safety in industry sectors such as utilities and healthcare.

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Methodology

In the third quarter of 2024, Focus Network, conducted 156 interviews and surveys with EHS and injury management leaders in Australia.

Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to injury management and its integration into the wider EHS ecosystem. Many of the questions relate specifically to the technology being used in injury management and EHS and the ways data is being used to drive improved outcomes.

Responses to these questions were then used to determine improvements that can be made to injury management.

The diagrams below illustrate the survey sample split by role.

Figure 16: Survey Sample Split by Role (%)





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We empower business and technology leaders to implement best practices and optimize their expenditures by providing unparalleled analysis and documentation. We deliver this through our global events, industry reports, and board assessments. hsi donesafe

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