



3 September 2025

Ms Marie Boland

Chief Executive Officer

Safe Work Australia

GPO BOX 641

Canberra ACT 2601

Via: Consultation portal

Dear Ms Boland

**Draft model Code of Practice: Managing the risks of biological hazards at work**

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Safe Work Australia's (SWA) consultation on the draft model Code of Practice: Managing the risk of biological hazards at work (the model Code).

We support the creation of a model Code that will provide practical guidance for small businesses to meet their legal obligations regarding how to manage risks of biological hazards at work. Practical and accessible guidance is important for Australia's 2.6 million small businesses, who often lack the time, administrative and financial resources to develop and implement their own policies and processes.

We acknowledge the importance of the draft model Code in providing guidance to all persons conducting a business or undertaking, regardless of size or industry. However, in the development of the code we encourage SWA to consider the limited capacity and resources of many small businesses, and therefore the importance of clear and actionable guidance to assist small business owners and operators to understand their obligations. A useful test we often apply to guidance intended for small business is whether it provides actionable information that answers the question in the mind of time-poor and resource-constrained small businesses – *What specifically is it they want me to do?*

To ensure the model Code is suitable for small businesses, we recommend SWA prioritise two key areas: simplification and front-loading actionable content, and a public awareness and education campaign.

**Recommendation 1: SWA should review the draft model Code to prioritise clear, concise and practical guidance tailored to small businesses.**

While the model Code provides comprehensive guidance to manage the risk of biological hazards, it should be presented in a form that is accessible for small businesses. These businesses often lack administrative capacity and workplace, health and safety (WHS) expertise; highlighting the importance of guidance that is clear, concise and practical. Streamlining content and presenting actionable steps upfront would better support small business owners in meeting their obligations without unnecessary administrative burden.

Moving the checklist, located on page 88 (Appendix J), to the front of the document (ideally within the first few pages) would assist resource constrained small business owners to quickly



understand key requirements and take actionable steps to implement risk controls, without having to navigate the full guidance. This simple change would significantly enhance the document's accessibility for small businesses. Further, we suggest that the checklist be transformed into an interactive decision-support tool, which could help small businesses understand and fulfil their WHS obligations. It could also alert them to specific obligations for their industry and guide them to industry best practices.

The concept of what is “reasonably practicable” is central to understanding and applying the draft model Code, however, details are currently provided via an external website linked to the draft code, which creates additional steps to accessing this important information. To improve accessibility, a concise description of “reasonably practicable” should be included at the front of the guidance document. This would ensure that all users, especially those unfamiliar with WHS terminology, can immediately grasp the concept without needing to search further.

**Recommendation 2: SWA should work with state and territory regulators to undertake a national awareness and education campaign on managing risks of biological hazards at work.**

Awareness raising is essential to ensuring small businesses understand their obligations under the draft model Code and can implement appropriate measures to manage biological hazards. Many small business owners are resource constrained and may not have dedicated WHS personnel, making it critical that they have access to information that is clear, concise, and easily digestible.

Guidance material, such as checklists, case studies, and short instructional videos, can help demystify compliance and provide practical, low-cost solutions that are relevant to small business contexts. Translations into multiple languages and formats accessible to people with disabilities would further enhance reach and inclusivity.

To maximise the reach and accessibility of educational materials, SWA should work with state and territory WHS regulators to ensure that guidance resources related to the model Code are consistent across jurisdictions and freely available on the relevant websites.

SWA may also wish to consider using multicultural chambers of commerce to reach small businesses from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, who often rely on these organisations to receive and clarify information.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Policy and Advocacy Team at [advocacy@asbfeo.gov.au](mailto:advocacy@asbfeo.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

**The Hon Bruce Billson**

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman