



AWARE NS

Nova Scotia Health + Community Services Safety Association

Rising Through Action

2025–26

Annual Report

Contents

A look back at how AWARE-NS delivered on its mission across Nova Scotia's health and community services sectors in 2025–26, and where we're headed next.

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2025–26 AT A GLANCE

25,092

Total participants reached

99%

Said programming was beneficial to their role

\$356,296

Safety training backfill distributed

1

Small, but mighty team behind it all

A Message from our Leadership

Dear Members, Partners, and Friends of AWARE-NS,

As we reflect on 2025–26, we are reminded of what makes this organization worth fighting for.

This was a year defined by the dedication of a team that showed up with consistency, purpose, and genuine commitment to the sectors, through every challenge the year brought. They delivered programming across the province, launched new courses, and overhauled an entire e-learning catalogue. They built systems and structures that make AWARE-NS a stronger, more accountable organization. These are the actions of people who believe deeply that safe workplaces save lives. And when a disruption to funding put operations at risk, they met it with steadiness, grit, and the same unwavering commitment that has come to define this team.

We are also proud of what the numbers reflect. Four years of sustained growth has more than doubled our reach while reducing operating costs by approximately one-third. These are not accidents. They are the result of disciplined, meaningful work, and a direct reflection of the trust that our members and funders have placed in AWARE-NS.

That trust is not lost on us. The health and community services sectors do extraordinary work under extraordinary pressure, caring for Nova Scotia's most vulnerable people, often with fewer resources than the work demands. Access to high-quality occupational health and safety programming is not a luxury for these organizations. It is a foundation, and AWARE-NS exists to make sure that foundation holds.

Looking ahead, our focus in 2026–27 is clear: building an organization that the sector can always count on. That means developing the continuity and sustainability frameworks that ensure our members never face a gap in access to AWARE-NS resources. The work is concrete, the direction is set, and the team is ready.

Thank you to our members, our partners, our board, and our funders at the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and the Department of Opportunities and Social Development. Your continued support and collaboration make everything in this report possible.

With gratitude and confidence in the year ahead,



Lorna O'Grady
Board Chair, AWARE-NS



Rachel Byrne
Executive Director, AWARE-NS



Lorna O'Grady
Board Chair



Rachel Byrne
Executive Director

Board of Directors 2025–2026

AWARE-NS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors representing home care and home support, community-based care, facility-based long-term care, front-line workers, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and labour, ensuring workplace safety remains a top priority at every level of the organization.

NAME	ORGANIZATION & TITLE	BOARD SEAT REPRESENTATIVE	TERM
Lorna O'Grady	Harbour View Hospital Nursing Home, Resident Care Manager	Board Chair · Facility-Based Long-Term Care	2027
Shannon McLellan	Colchester Residential Services Society, Executive Director	Vice Chair / Treasurer · Community-Based Disability Support	2026
Juanita Ranni	Harbour View Hospital, Rehabilitation Services Manager	Secretary · Frontline Worker	2027
Craig Thiel	NS Health, Manager of OHS & Wellness, Eastern Zone	Acute Care	2028
Joanna Osborne	Windsor Elms Village, Director of Food Service	Member-at-Large	2027
Amanda Washington	Victorian Order of Nurses, Continuing Care Associate	Home Care / Home Support	2027
Joyce d'Entremont	Mountains and Meadows, Chief Executive Officer	Disability Support Program · Facility Based	2028
Matt Ross	Workers' Compensation Board of NS, Director Employer Performance	Ex-Officio	N/A
Sandra Mullen	NS Government Employees Union, President	Labour	2028

The Board sets AWARE-NS's strategic direction and provides governance oversight of programming, finances, and organizational accountability, ensuring the association continues to reflect the sectors it serves.

WE'RE RECRUITING: MEMBER-AT-LARGE

AWARE-NS currently has an open Member-at-Large seat on its Board of Directors. Individuals interested in contributing to the governance and strategic direction of the organization are warmly encouraged to reach out to learn more, at info@awarens.ca.

Organization Overview

About Us

AWARE-NS is the Nova Scotia Health & Community Services Safety Association. Since 2009, we have advanced workplace safety across the health and community services sectors, where professionals face some of the highest rates of workplace injury, both physical and psychological, of any occupational group in the province (WCB Nova Scotia, 2024).

Our team of OHS Advisors delivers evidence-informed training, safety audits, and OHS Program guidance tailored to the unique challenges of our sectors. Supporting organizations in building cultures of safety, accountability, and prevention across the province.

FUNDED BY

AWARE-NS is funded by the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and the Department of Opportunities and Social Development, whose investments in occupational health and safety support accessible programming to organizations across Nova Scotia.



Our OHS Team

Our team of Occupational Health and Safety Advisors brings specialized education and hands-on sector expertise to help organizations across Nova Scotia create safer, more resilient workplaces. Together with our Executive Director, these five people delivered programming to over 25,000 participants in 2025–26.



Jonathan Murley

OHS Advisor



Alan Baretta

Senior OHS Advisor



Beth Barczyk

OHS Advisor



Reza Jannati

OHS Advisor

VISION

Make Workplace Injury the Exception

CORE PURPOSE

AWARE-NS exists to build a strong OHS culture where every health and community services employee is safe at work.

CORE VALUES

01 Rigorous

Our work is grounded in evidence. We hold ourselves to the same standards we champion.

02 Principled

We advocate for safety even when it's uncomfortable. We do what's right, even when it's hard.

03 Collaborative

We achieve more through partnerships. We trust each other and share the load.

04 Genuine

We lead with empathy and meet people where they are. We bring our whole selves: warmth, honesty, and a little levity.

These values guide every operational decision, every training we design and deliver, and every relationship we build with the sectors we serve.

"The injury rate in the province's largest sector, health care and social services, improved by 30 percent through innovative prevention work and strategic partnerships with AWARE-NS, the Nova Scotia Government, and employers. In high-demand areas like long-term care and home care, injury rates are now at all-time lows."

WCB NOVA SCOTIA



*"Safe + healthy people.
Safe + healthy workplaces."*

Programs + Services

AWARE-NS delivers practical training, resources, and programs to support health, safety, and wellness across Nova Scotia's health and community services sectors, from injury prevention and workplace violence prevention to psychological health and safety. Our full catalogue of e-learning courses is available anytime at learn.awarens.ca.

SAFERi: Safety Leadership

Equipping supervisors, managers and leaders with the knowledge and skills to understand their health and safety responsibilities and build a culture of safety in their workplace.

Safe Handling & Mobility

Helping organizations prevent musculoskeletal injuries by aligning leadership, safe work processes, and equipment use within a structured health and safety framework.

Workplace Violence Prevention

Supporting organizations in building a workplace violence prevention program that meets Nova Scotia's legislative requirements and is tailored to their unique environment.

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee

Equipping JOHSC members with the foundational knowledge and practical skills needed to fulfill their legislative role effectively.

Psychological Health and Safety: From Awareness to Action

Equipping leaders and staff with the tools to recognize, respond to, and reduce psychological risks in the workplace.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

SAFER Sustainability: Embedding safe handling practices into long-term organizational culture.

Lifting and Moving Safely: A practical approach to identifying and preventing musculoskeletal injuries from everyday workplace tasks.

Workplace Harassment Prevention: Building skills to recognize, respond to, and prevent workplace harassment.

PHS: Employer Obligations: Supporting employers through their obligations under Nova Scotia's 2025 psychological safety updates.

Workplace Safety Audits: An objective, evidence-based assessment of your safety management system, with advisor support to act on the findings.

Code White: Preparing facility-based staff to recognize escalating behaviour and respond effectively.

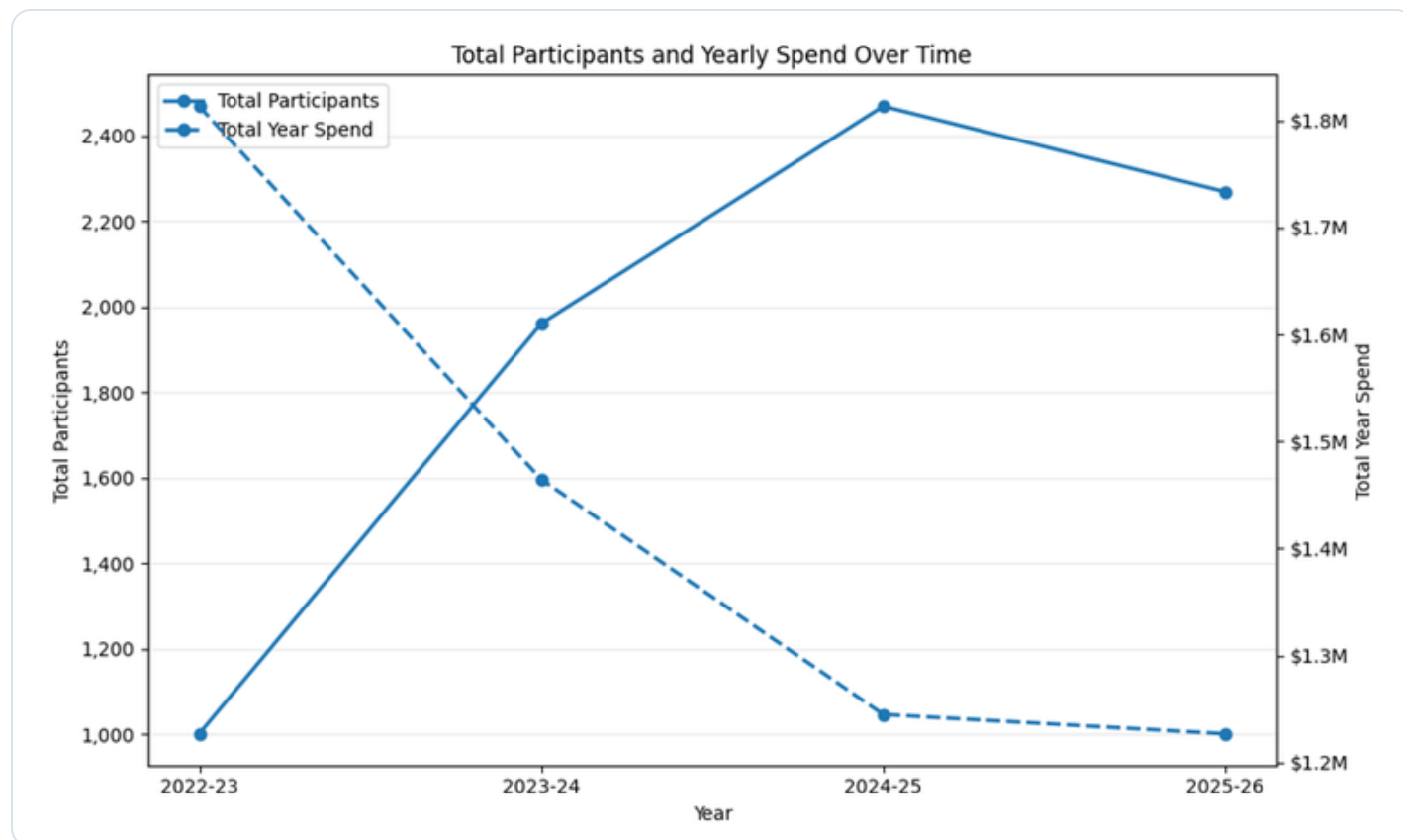
WVP Workshop: Building staff knowledge and skills to recognize, prevent, and respond to workplace violence.

WVP Risk Assessment: Guiding organizations through their legislatively required workplace violence risk assessment.

OHS Program: Supporting organizations in building an OHS program tailored to their sector.

Financial Highlight

More reach. Less spend.



Between 2022–23 and 2025–26, AWARE-NS more than doubled in-person participant reach while reducing annual operating expenditures by approximately one-third. A sustained trajectory of efficiency, modernization, and sector impact. The direction is clear, and it is intentional.

AWARE-NS ended 2025–26 in a positive financial position, achieved through disciplined oversight, careful spending controls, and a continued focus on organizational accountability, all while maintaining service continuity and program delivery across the sector.



Total Revenue

\$1,654,910

Total revenue recognized in 2025–26

Comprising \$1,078,301 in new government funding (\$753,101 from the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and \$325,200 from the Department of Opportunities and Social Development) plus \$576,609 in carried-over deferred revenue recognized this year, most of it tied to the safety training backfill.



Total Expenses

\$1,226,708

Total operating expenses in 2025–26

Comprising safety training backfill distributed to sector organizations, personnel costs, programming expenses, building and operations, and governance and administration.

Year in Review

Delivery & Reach Across the Sector

2025–26 was a year to be proud of. Our dedicated team reached over 25,000 sector members, launched new programming, rebuilt our e-learning catalogue from the ground up, and strengthened the organization at its core.

2,268

In-person participants

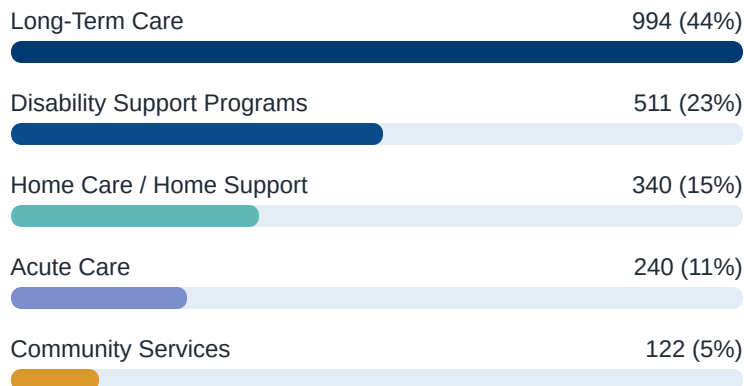
22,824

E-learning completions

25,092

Total reach

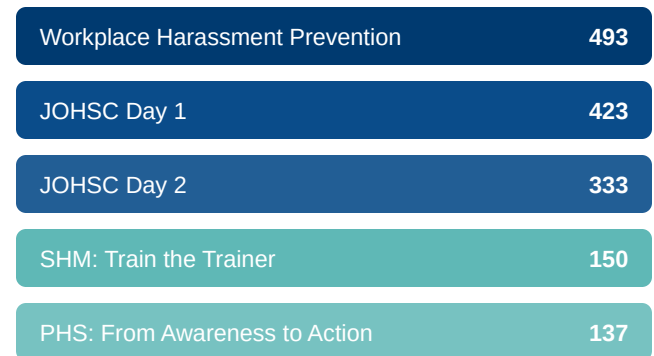
IN-PERSON BY SECTOR



IN-PERSON BY ZONE



TOP IN-PERSON COURSES



TOP E-LEARNING COURSES



EVALUATION

67%

Evaluation completion rate

99%

Said programming was beneficial to their role

Operational Highlights

2025–26: Delivery, Growth, and a Year-End Moment of Clarity

STRENGTHENING OUR FOUNDATIONS

Operational & Financial Discipline

In 2025–26, AWARE-NS made significant strides in organizational infrastructure. A Financial Controls Policy was implemented, standardized financial and quarterly reporting was established, and streamlined how AWARE-NS presents its funding requirements to government partners. Organizational policies and procedures were refined throughout the year with a focus on financial accountability, decision-making clarity, and long-term operational continuity. Toward the end of the fiscal year, AWARE-NS began the search for a new office space that better aligned with our values and safety practices, a move that was completed in the new fiscal year.

New Brand Identity

AWARE-NS launched new brand guidelines in 2025–26, establishing a refreshed visual identity and a clearer framework for how the organization presents itself across all channels. The brand package has since been applied consistently across all programmatic materials, communications, and member-facing resources.

E-Learning Overhaul

A complete overhaul of AWARE-NS's 32-program e-learning suite was one of the year's most substantial undertakings. Every module was reviewed and updated for content accuracy and sector relevance. Each was also refreshed to align with current legislation, best practices, and the new brand. By year-end, the large majority of this work was complete, with remaining modules on a clear path to final publication in Q1 of 2026–27.

22,824

2025–26 e-learning completions

+21%

→ vs. 18,904 prior year

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: FALL TOUR 2025

In 2025, Nova Scotia updated its occupational health and safety legislation to formally include psychological health and safety. In anticipation of this change, AWARE-NS developed **Psychological Health and Safety: From Awareness to Action** to help sector organizations understand what the legislation requires and build the knowledge and culture needed to go beyond compliance. The program debuted at the 2025 Fall Tour to an overwhelming response: 137 participants across all four health zones, generating the highest confidence growth rate of any AWARE-NS program at +30.8%. By year-end, both PH&S: From Awareness to Action and PH&S: Employer Obligations were added to the permanent course catalogue, ensuring ongoing access for organizations at every stage of their psychological safety journey.

2025–26 MILESTONES



Financial Controls Policy

Standardized reporting & budget framework



Brand Guidelines Launched

Applied across all programs & platforms



PH&S Added to Catalogue

Fall Tour debut to permanent programming, with expanded content



Sector Survey Distributed

400+ responses, largest ever



Website Rebuild Underway

Resource library → engagement platform

Sector Survey

What the Sector Told Us

AWARE-NS distributed its annual sector survey in 2025–26, receiving almost 400 analyzed responses, our strongest response rate to date. In 2026–27, the findings will be translated into a formal action plan; priorities already reflected in our operational plan include expanded psychological health and safety programming, targeted outreach to re-engage lapsed members, and a renewed focus on organizations that have yet to access AWARE-NS resources.

4.24_{/5}
Program Usefulness

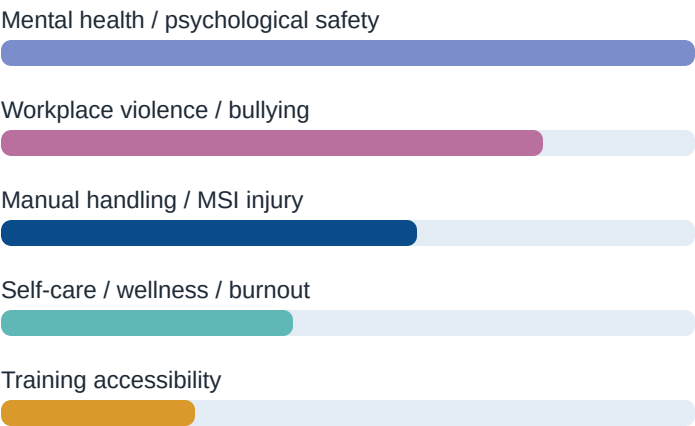
4.25_{/5}
Program Relevance

The sector spoke. We're building the response.

3.79_{/5}
Safety Outcomes

97%
Central Intake Satisfaction

WHAT MEMBERS WANT AWARE-NS TO FOCUS ON



THE VALUE OF STAYING CONNECTED

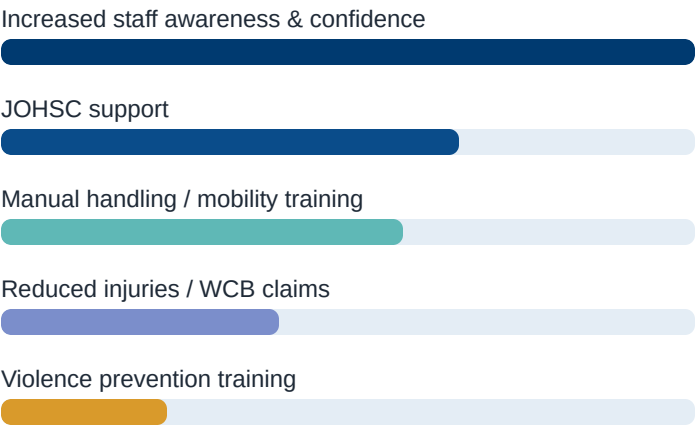
ENGAGEMENT	USEFUL	RELEVANT	RECOMMEND
Past year (n=228)	4.44	4.43	8.67/10
2–4 yrs ago (n=73)	4.08	4.01	7.10/10

Members who engage with AWARE-NS within the past year score every metric significantly higher: 8.67/10 recommendation likelihood vs. 7.10/10 for those who last engaged 2–4 years ago. Sustained connection is the value.

OUR STRONGEST RESPONSE YET

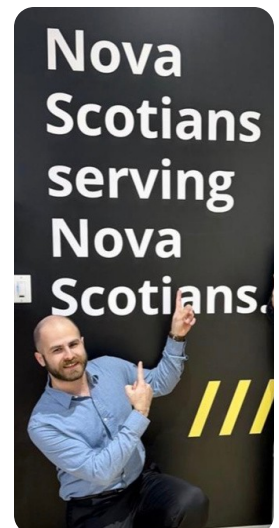
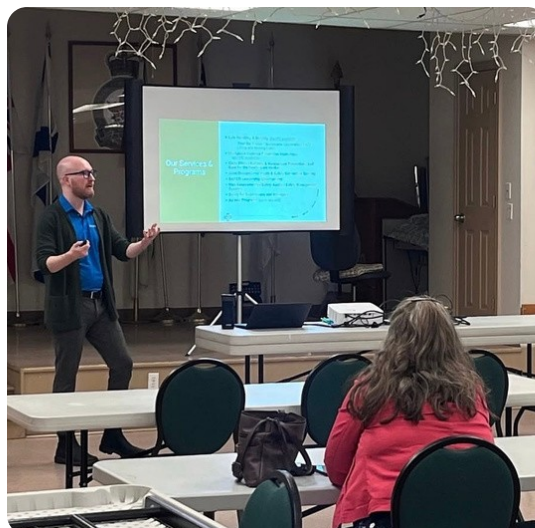
Nearly 400 analyzed responses in 2025–26, more than double the combined engagement history captured in the table above, and the clearest picture yet of what the sector needs from AWARE-NS.

WHAT MEMBERS SAY ABOUT IMPACT



On the Road with AWARE-NS

Bringing AWARE-NS programming, partnership, and presence on the road across Nova Scotia in 2025–26, from conference floors to sector association meetings to award celebrations.



Working through Uncertainty, Together

In late February 2026, a disruption to future funding brought AWARE-NS operations and programming to a halt. The pause was temporary, but it was not trivial: it surfaced a vulnerability the organization can no longer leave unmitigated.

THE RESPONSE

The AWARE-NS team responded swiftly and without hesitation. Communication with funders remained open, and the team rallied, exploring every possible avenue, reaching out to partners, sector members, and resources across the province to protect the organization's viability. Programming resumed and the relationships held. We are proud of how the team handled a genuinely difficult moment, and deeply grateful to those who stood with us.

WHAT IT REVEALED

Occupational health and safety training in the health and community services sector is not a discretionary investment. The workers we serve face some of the highest injury rates in the province, caring for Nova Scotia's most vulnerable people, often doing more with less. AWARE-NS programs reduce injuries, reduce WCB claims, build JOHSC capacity, and support the psychological health of a workforce under extraordinary pressure. A funding disruption that interrupts access to this programming, however briefly, represents a critical oversight in long-term thinking: organizations at the margins cannot afford unplanned gaps in their safety resources. A model built on a single funding source carries a systemic fragility incompatible with AWARE-NS's responsibility to the sectors.

Where We're Going

Building for the Long Term

The work ahead is not about survival. It is about building an organization that the sector can always count on: one that is resourced, sustainable, and structured to continue growing into the full scope of what occupational health and safety in health and community services requires. Three pillars will guide everything AWARE-NS does in 2026–27.

01 Stabilize

Maintain consistent, high-quality delivery of core OHS programming across Nova Scotia. Ensuring service continuity for the sector is our first and most fundamental commitment.

02 Modernize

Enhance how workplace safety education is delivered through updated programming, modern platforms, and technology-forward tools, including a comprehensive revitalization of AWARE-NS's in-person programming suite. Continuing to build out more programs and services, recognizing that each sector needs training built for them, not just adapted for them.

03 Sustain

Strengthen AWARE-NS's long-term viability through operational efficiencies and diversified revenue development, ensuring that a funding disruption never again interrupts the sector's access to essential health and safety resources.

2026

–27

Resource continuity for the sector. That is the goal: ensuring that every organization, every supervisor, and every frontline worker in Nova Scotia's health and community services sector can always access the training they need to stay safe at work.

Thank You!

Behind every program, resource, and initiative AWARE-NS delivers is a small team with a big mission, supported by dedicated contracted professionals who make it all possible. We extend our sincere gratitude to:

Yvette and Thomas Thibodeau, Darryl Hein and the XM Media Team, Roy Mestdagh, Patrick Hartling, Global Storm IT, and Eva Munro-Barnes.

Your expertise, commitment, and belief in what AWARE-NS is building make a real difference. Thank you for being part of it.

Making workplace injury
the exception in health and
community services.

Rising Through Action

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