WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE CHANGING

What Councils & LGAs Need to Know

Most new limits start on 1 December 2026

Australia is transitioning from Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) to Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL), and some limits are falling sharply.

Start dates vary by state. Victoria and Queensland have delayed 15 substances, including bitumen (asphalt) fumes, Portland cement and manganese, to 1 December 2029. NSW applies them from 1 December 2026. Diesel has interim limits in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Check which dates apply across your workforce and sites.

What should councils & LGAs do now?

- **IDENTIFY** AIRBORNE CONTAMINANTS GENERATED ACROSS DEPOTS, CREWS, WORKSHOPS AND SERVICES.
- **CHECK** SUBSTANCES FROM COUNCIL OPERATIONS THAT HAVE NEW OR CHANGED WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS.
- **ASSESS** IF EXISTING EXPOSURE MONITORING IS REPRESENTATIVE ACROSS DIFFERENT WORK GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES.
- **CONTROL** EXPOSURE THROUGH PLANT CONTROLS, VENTILATION, ISOLATION, WORK PRACTICES AND PPE.
- **PREPARE** NOW, RATHER THAN WAITING FOR THE NEW LIMITS TO TAKE EFFECT.

How JTA can help?



Do you know which WEL changes affect your workplace?

SOME EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE REDUCING SIGNIFICANTLY

EXAMPLE CONTAMINANT	CURRENT WES	NEW WEL	CHANGE
Diesel particulate matter †	No national WES	0.01 mg/m³ as respirable elemental carbon	**New limit**
Manganese*† – dust & compounds**	1 mg/m³	0.1 mg/m³ inhalable / 0.02 mg/m³	**Up to 98% ↓**
Toluene	50 ppm	20 ppm	**60% ↓**
Styrene monomer †	50 ppm	20 ppm	**60% ↓**

These are examples only. † Later in some states. Diesel: 0.05 mg/m³ in NSW to June 2028, 0.1 mg/m³ in Vic & Qld to Dec 2029, WA undecided. Manganese, styrene: Vic & Qld from Dec 2029. ***New manganese WELs: 0.1 mg/m³ inhalable and 0.02 mg/m³ respirable.

Common airborne exposures in councils & LGAs

EXPOSURE	WHERE IT MAY OCCUR
Diesel exhaust	Depots, fleet workshops, waste operations, road crews and enclosed work areas
Silica dust	Roadworks, cutting, grinding, drilling and construction activities
Welding fumes	Workshops, plant maintenance, fabrication and repairs
Dusts and particulates	Road maintenance, waste handling, parks, construction and material handling
Solvents & VOCs	Painting, coatings, cleaning, degreasing and maintenance activities
Chemicals and aerosols	Parks and gardens, pest control, cleaning and operational services

Important: not every exposure listed above has a changing limit. For example, the respirable crystalline silica exposure limit is not changing on 1 December 2026, but silica remains an important exposure that councils must continue to manage.

IDENTIFY CONTAMINANTS » **ASSESS EXPOSURE** » **AIR MONITORING** » **COMPARE LIMITS** » **RECOMMEND CONTROLS**

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