WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE CHANGING

What Manufacturers 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 many limits are falling sharply.

Start dates vary by state. Victoria and Queensland have delayed 15 substances, including manganese, styrene, nickel and perchloroethylene, to 1 December 2029. NSW applies them from 1 December 2026. Diesel exhaust has interim limits in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Check which dates apply at each of your sites.

What should manufacturers do now?

- **IDENTIFY** THE AIRBORNE CONTAMINANTS GENERATED OR USED ACROSS YOUR OPERATIONS.
- **CHECK** WHICH SUBSTANCES HAVE NEW OR CHANGED WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS.
- **ASSESS** WHETHER EXISTING EXPOSURE MONITORING REMAINS REPRESENTATIVE AND SUFFICIENT.
- **CONTROL** EXPOSURE THROUGH ENGINEERING CONTROLS, VENTILATION/LEV, 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 DRAMATICALLY

EXAMPLE CONTAMINANT	CURRENT WES	NEW WEL	CHANGE
Manganese*** – dust & compounds †	1 mg/m³	0.1 mg/m³ inhalable / 0.02 mg/m³	NEW LIMITS
Maleic anhydride	0.25 ppm	0.0025 ppm	99% ↓
Molybdenum – soluble compounds	5 mg/m³	0.5 mg/m³	90% ↓
Styrene monomer †	50 ppm	20 ppm	60% ↓

These are examples only. † Victoria & Queensland: from 1 December 2029. Other limits shown start on 1 December 2026. ***New manganese WELs: 0.1 mg/m³ inhalable and 0.02 mg/m³ respirable.

Common airborne exposures in manufacturing

EXPOSURE	WHERE IT MAY OCCUR
Welding fumes & metals	Welding, fabrication, cutting and hot work
Metal dusts	Grinding, machining, polishing and metal processing
Solvents & VOCs	Painting, coating, adhesives, degreasing and cleaning
Process dusts	Mixing, weighing, transfer, cutting and production
Diesel exhaust	Mobile plant, forklifts, loading areas and enclosed spaces
Silica dust	Cutting, grinding or processing silica-containing materials

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 workplace exposure that must continue to be managed.

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

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