

**6TH MEETING  
INTERNATIONAL  
ADVISORY PANEL 2018  
FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH**



**REPORT OF  
THE 6TH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL  
FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH**

## INTRODUCTION

1 The International Advisory Panel (IAP) for Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) was formed in 2006 with the following terms of reference:

- a. Advise on significant trends and developments in workplace practices that would impact on WSH in Singapore;
- b. Share approaches to WSH challenges in other countries that might guide Singapore's WSH developments; and
- c. Critique WSH standards, practices and the regulatory regime in Singapore and provide advice on possible improvements to bring WSH standards in Singapore to the level of leading edge country leaders.

2 Five IAP meetings (2006, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2016) had been held. These meetings contributed significantly to the advancement of WSH standards and outcomes in Singapore. Recommendations from IAP were instrumental in the formulation of the national strategy for WSH in 2008 and the establishment of the WSH Institute in 2011.

## SIXTH IAP MEETING

3 The sixth IAP meeting was convened on 28 and 30 August 2018 at the Marina Mandarin Hotel and Suntec Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. The meeting was attended by four<sup>1</sup> IAP members (see list of IAP members at Annex). The Sixth IAP meeting deliberated on the state and progress of WSH developments in Singapore.

4 The IAP also discussed, shared insights and provided valuable inputs on Singapore's WSH2028 draft recommendations developed by the WSH2028 Tripartite Strategy Committee. The WSH2028 strategy charts out Singapore's WSH directions for the next 10 years.

5 The IAP members attended either of two site visits prior in the morning to the meeting. The IAP members learned about how Keppel Shipyard managed both safety and health of their workers through the Total WSH approach. They also experienced how

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<sup>1</sup> Ms Marie Larue and Dr Park Doo Yong were unable to attend due to schedule conflict.

solutions from the WSH Technology Challenge<sup>2</sup> were applied on vehicles for fatigue management and collision detection to reduce risky behaviours of drivers.

6 The IAP commended Singapore for achieving significant improvements in her WSH performance within a short span of just over ten years, and her commitment to the Vision Zero strategy. The IAP agreed that the revised target to reduce and sustain Singapore's workplace fatal injury rate at less than 1.0 per 100,000 employed persons would make Singapore one of the safest workplaces in the world. Only four countries have achieved and sustained such a low workplace fatal injury rate – Germany, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Sweden - and they had a much longer journey. The IAP further cautioned that because of Singapore's small workforce, her workplace fatal injury rate is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations.

7 The IAP supported the draft WSH2028 Strategy and offered five recommendations for consideration to incorporate into the Strategy:

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Understanding the Future of Work***

8 The IAP highlighted the increasing pace of change in the operating landscape across the world. The IAP acknowledged that the WSH2028 Strategy considers the future of work in terms of economic, demographic, and technological shifts, as well as changing business models and employment relationships. The challenge is to identify, anticipate, develop and implement strategies to both harness opportunities and address the new and increased risks that these changes might bring for workplace safety and health. In particular, the Strategy should ensure that safety and health are designed into new models, products, processes and work organisations. The IAP highlighted that while technological advancements may introduce new ways to mitigate safety and health risks by automation and reducing human errors for instance, it may also introduce new risks as workers may become reliant on machines and lose their competencies. Therefore, the IAP thus stressed the importance of designing out WSH risks upstream and investing in training for all stakeholders to ensure safety and health messages are communicated effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> The Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Technology Challenge was launched in 2017 to tackle work related vehicular accidents through the use of technology.

### [Recommendation 1: Strengthen learning from accidents and near-misses](#)

9 The IAP noted that the WSH2028 strategy aimed to inculcate a culture of prevention, trust and care. Such a culture should translate to companies being open to learning from accidents and near-misses. This should be for the purpose of prevention rather than fault-finding.

10 The IAP highlighted the importance of companies conducting their own investigations of near-misses, as this will allow them to identify and address gaps in their processes and procedures to prevent potential incidents. If ignored, the opportunity is lost to use the learnings from near-misses to prevent future injuries or even fatalities.

11 The IAP recommended Singapore to explore ways to further encourage companies in their investigations of near misses and accidents to focus on identifying root causes and underlying institutional factors, rather than finding fault.

### [Recommendation 2: Leveraging on tripartite cooperation to deepen WSH ownership](#)

12 IAP recognised the strong tripartite relationship in Singapore and advised to leverage on it to enhance worker's participation in WSH at the enterprise level. The IAP emphasised that while employers are ultimately responsible for safety and health at workplaces, workers' contribution and participation are equally important as they can provide valuable insights to work situations, risks, and potential solutions to WSH challenges. IAP thus recommended harnessing the resources of the workers to contribute to the management of WSH risks. For example, in relation to Recommendation 1, the IAP highlighted the importance of employers and workers collaborating in investigations of near misses and accidents to advance the culture of prevention in the workplace.

### [Recommendation 3: Driving WSH improvement through Board of Directors](#)

13 The IAP supported the WSH2028 Strategy's proposal to transform the business environment into one that demands for good WSH outcomes. Top management is best placed to direct and influence the WSH culture in a company as it controls the resources and practices on the ground. The IAP supported the recommendation to lay out the WSH duties of the Board of Directors. For example, these requirements were legislated in Australia as they assisted companies to focus on their responsibilities and what they needed to do to ensure safety and health. The techniques used for WSH also helped improve other operations in the companies.

14 The IAP recognised that Singapore's Workplace Safety and Health Act already assigns obligations and holds the Board of Directors responsible for WSH lapses. Thus, the WSH2028 Strategy's recommended Code of Practice will help them better understand their roles and set expectations. The IAP recommended that the guidelines be developed in partnership with appropriate industry fora to inculcate stewardship of WSH. Noting that some companies have expressed concerns about the cost of WSH, the IAP recommended that the WSH Institute raise awareness of the positive return on investment on WSH, and to work with local partners to maintain currency of such evidence.

[Recommendation 4: Managing health risks in addition to occupational diseases, in particular psychosocial risks](#)

15 The IAP agreed with the WSH2028 recommendation to expand the existing occupational disease (OD) list. The IAP recommends identifying and developing intervention strategies to address the primary sources of ODs and related industry sectors to prioritise efforts for better prevention.

16 The IAP also stressed the importance of recognising and addressing other work-related health risks. In particular, psychosocial stress is expected to become more prevalent in the increasingly fast-paced and rapidly changing society. Hence, the WSH2028 strategy should look into addressing this challenge. Nonetheless, the IAP shared that other jurisdictions also faced difficulties in managing psychosocial issues due to its complex and multi-factorial nature.

17 The IAP recommended addressing psychosocial issues through a promotional approach that raises awareness, provides guidance and tools. This includes addressing working conditions and arrangements. IAP also suggested Singapore to refer to the published guidelines and tools from other countries to help companies and workers manage psychosocial health.

[Recommendation 5: Clarify principals' WSH responsibilities to self-employed persons](#)

18 The IAP highlighted the increasing trend of self-employed persons (commonly known as freelancers) observed in many countries, and suggested that the WSH2028 Strategy consider the potential growth of self-employed persons in Singapore over the next decade.

19 While Singapore already imposes WSH duties on principals to ensure that self-employed persons they engage have the expertise to carry out the work and have taken adequate safety and health measures, self-employed persons may not benefit from the structured risk assessment processes present in companies. The IAP highlighted that while business processes and relationships are changing, WSH responsibilities should continue to remain with the employers or principals, and encouraged Singapore to maintain this. The IAP have hence recommended Singapore to provide guidance to principals on how they discharge their duties.

## CONCLUSION

20 Singapore has achieved improvements in WSH performance through the concerted efforts of all stakeholders. The IAP believes that through the WSH 2028 Strategy, Singapore can reduce and sustain her workplace fatal injury rate at less than 1.0 per 100,000 employed persons. This report is the outcome of the IAP's deliberations at its sixth meeting to elevate and sustain Singapore's WSH performance. The IAP provides these recommendations for consideration.

