



A reflection and the future of health and safety in New Zealand

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As we publish volume 2, edition 1 of the New Zealand Journal of Health and Safety Practice, it is an opportune moment to reflect on our journey and consider the future of our profession. The field of health and safety in New Zealand has seen significant advancements, driven by the most part through initiatives from the professions and the enthusiasm and passion of the health and safety community. It is important then that we celebrate our achievements, acknowledge the challenges, and envision the path ahead.

The establishment of this journal has been a milestone for health and safety professionals in New Zealand. It provides a dedicated platform for sharing research, best practice, and innovative solutions, fostering a community of practitioners and researchers committed to improving workplace safety and health. Over the first three editions we explored a wide range of topics, from the management of hazardous substances to the integration of mental health considerations in workplace safety. This edition further extends the range of subjects.

One of the most significant achievements has been the journal's role in bridging the gap between academic research and practical application. By disseminating evidence-based insights, we have empowered the health and safety community to consider and implement effective health and safety measures. This interdisciplinary approach has not only enhanced the quality of our work but also ensured its relevance to real-world challenges.

In an ideal world, we would have seen the use of evidenced-based research contributing to information to policymakers to develop robust regulations. We're not there yet, but those contributing to the development of industry-led guidance know they have the journal's resources at their disposal to assist them

I also see the health and safety profession in New Zealand is at a critical juncture. On one hand, there is a growing recognition of the importance of workplace health and safety, reflected in the increased investment by individuals in training and development programmes. The outcome of this is seen in increased participation in the professions, along with the pursuit of accreditation and certification. The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 is also a cornerstone in driving improvements, setting clear responsibilities, most notably at the governance level. On the other hand, the profession still faces significant challenges, including a shortage of qualified and experienced professionals, the need for continuous professional development at post-graduate level, and the imperative to learn, understand, and adapt to emerging risks such as robotics and artificial intelligence. As individuals this means we must embrace new methodologies, explore emerging areas of risk, and continuously reassess our approaches to ensure they remain relevant and impactful.

Looking ahead, the future of health and safety in New Zealand holds both promise and uncertainty. To navigate this landscape, we must remain adaptable and open. Open to innovation, open to new information and research, and open to changing our stance and direction on receipt of evidenced-based advice.

As we celebrate the achievements of the New Zealand Journal of Health and Safety Practice, we must also look forward with a sense of purpose and optimism. The challenges we face are significant, but so too are the opportunities. By leveraging our collective strengths, embracing innovation, and remaining open to new research and methodologies, we can ensure that the health and safety profession continues to thrive. Together, we can make meaningful contributions to our society, fostering safer and healthier workplaces for all.