

Safe Work Australia's style guide

For writing and editing

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Document revision

Date	Version	Changes
23 April 2024	1	Document created
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This guide applies to all Safe Work Australia’s written materials, including the Annual Report, Members papers, guidance materials and emails. It sets out the required use of words, punctuation, and grammar in those materials.

This style guide is consistent with the [Australian Government Style Manual](#). If there is something not covered in the style guide, please refer to the Australian Government Style Manual for advice.

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1. Quick format examples

What is being referred to	Example
Date format	Tuesday 22 June 2024
Addressing audiences	First Nations people or First Australians
Writing numbers rather than words for anything above one	Zero, one, 2, 3, 4
Use of an en dash	2017–18
Time	10 am, 4.30 pm, 9.30–11.30 am midnight, not 00:00
Phone numbers	02 6212 3456, 0412 345 678
Money	\$100, \$0.50, US\$299
Percentages	30%, not per cent
Communicating with the Minister	Minister's offices Envelope: The Hon Murray Watt Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Salutation: Dear Minister In person: Minister
Organisational structure	Communications team, not Communications Team

2. Writing tips

- Write for the audience.
- Content should be concise, easy to read and structured to enable the reader to quickly find the information they need.
- Keep most paragraphs to 2 or 3 sentences. Short paragraphs help people understand content.
- Choose simple words, not complicated expressions.
- Use inclusive, gender-neutral language and consider users of non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Use the active voice rather than the passive. In the active voice the subject undertakes the action. The chairman (subject) signed the contract this morning rather than the contract was signed this morning by the chairman.

3. Referring to Safe Work Australia

- Safe Work Australia refers to a tripartite body made up of the Chair, Safe Work Australia Members and the Chief Executive Officer.
- The Safe Work Australia Agency or Agency refers to the Australian Public Service (the APS) agency made up of the CEO and the staff that support the Members.
- The Safe Work Australia Agency or Agency is used to differentiate between the Member body that is Safe Work Australia and the APS agency.
- Internal communication, including Members' meeting papers, should refer to the Agency (capital A).
- External communication including reports, publications, emails and letters should refer to Safe Work Australia, not the Agency. The agency (lower case a) is used when describing the entity in Department of Finance publications, for example the Portfolio Budget Statements.
- Use personal pronouns like 'we', 'you' and 'us' rather than 'Safe Work Australia' when it suits the voice and tone, for example when writing web content or internal communication.

4. Referring to Safe Work Australia's role

- Safe Work Australia develops national policy to improve work health and safety (WHS) and workers' compensation arrangements across Australia.
- Commonwealth, state and territory government bodies are responsible for making and enforcing their own work health and safety laws and managing workers' compensation schemes. Comcare is responsible for enforcing work health and safety laws and managing workers' compensation schemes for Australian Government employees and employees of organisations under the Comcare scheme.
- A small number of additional organisations work in collaboration with Safe Work Australia to develop national WHS policy, such as FWO, HWCA, and ASSEA.
- Safe Work Australia does not implement or enforce WHS laws. For information about laws governing WHS in your workplace, visit the Safe Work Australia [work health and safety and workers' compensation authorities webpage](#) for a list of government authorities and their contact details.
- Safe Work Australia develops and maintains the model WHS legislative framework. This includes the model WHS Act, model WHS Regulations and model Codes of Practice.
- For the model WHS laws to become legally binding they need to be implemented in a jurisdiction. Victoria has not implemented the model WHS laws.

5. Safe Work Australia and collaborative organisational acronyms

Organisation	Acronym
Safe Work Australia	SWA
Fair Work Ombudsman	FWO
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	DEWR
Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities	HWCA
Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities	HWSA
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency	ASSEA
Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission	SRCC
Australian Mesothelioma Registry	AMR
Communications Reference Group	CRG
Strategic Issues Group - Work Health and Safety	SIG-WHS
Strategic Issues Group - Workers' Compensation	SIG-WC
Master Builders Association	MBA
Australian Institute of Health and Safety	AIHS
Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists	AIOH
Australian Maritime Safety Authority	AMSA
Australian Industry Group	AIG/Ai Group
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	ACCI
Australian Council of Trade Unions	ACTU
Crane Industry Council of Australia	CICA
Australian Skills Quality Authority	ASQA
Office of Impact Analysis (previously OBPR – Office of Best Practice Regulation)	OIA
Australian Trucking Association	ATA
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator	NHVR
National Road Transport Association	NRTA
Australian Logistics Council	ALC

6. Safe Work Australia and government terms

Use	Instead of
Adviser	Advisor
work health and safety (WHS)	occupational health and safety (OHS)
quad bike	all-terrain vehicle
workers or staff	employees
First Nations people or First Australians	Indigenous Australians
work health and safety regulator	Regulator
workers' compensation authority	Regulator
person/people with disability	person/people with a disability, disabled person

In the first instance	After the first instance
work health and safety	WHS
Safe Work Australia	SWA
Safe Work Australia Members	Members

SIG-WHS members	members
SIG-Workers' Compensation members	members
WHS ministers	ministers
Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033	Australian Strategy
model Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act	model WHS Act
model Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations	model WHS Regulations
model Codes of Practice	model Codes
Safe Work Australia Chief Executive Officer, Marie Boland	Chief Executive Officer or Ms Boland or CEO
Safe Work Australia Chair, Joanne Farrell	the Chair or Ms Farrell
Safe Work Method Statement	SWMS
Person conducting a business or undertaking	PCBU
Personal protective equipment	PPE
Registered Training Organisation	RTO
Elevating Work Platform	EWP
Impact Analysis (previously CRIS – Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement and DRIS – Decision Regulatory Impact Statement)	IA
Australian Standard	AS
Request for quote	RFQ

7. Referring to the Minister

Envelope	The Hon Murray Watt Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Salutation	Dear Minister
In person	Minister

8. Referring to codes of practice

- Use lower case when referring to codes of practice as a general term, this is different to when referring to model Codes of Practice.
- Use title case when referring to an approved 'Code of Practice'.
- Use title and sentence case if using the full title, 'Code of Practice: Hazardous manual tasks'.
- Use 'model Codes' when referring to model Codes of Practice in a sentence after the first instance.

9. Referring to states and territories

Do not capitalise 'state' or 'territory', unless referring to a specific state or territory, for example, Northern Territory.

Spell out the full names. The correct formal and legal name for the Commonwealth and each state and territory government is as follows:

- Australian Government
- NSW Government
- Government of Victoria
- Queensland Government
- Government of Western Australia
- Government of South Australia
- Tasmanian Government
- ACT Government
- Northern Territory Government

Use shortened forms where space is limited, using the following order and format: NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, SA, Tas, ACT, NT.

10. Font and sizing

When preparing documents in Microsoft Office, use the following conventions:

- Font: Arial
- Document title size: 28
- Sub-heading size: 22, then 16, then 14
- Body size: 11

11. Punctuation, spelling and style

'A' or 'an'

- The choice depends on the sound of the word - if the first *sound* of the word that follows is a *vowel*—whether the first letter is a vowel or not—use 'an': an hour, an honour, an employment provider. If the first *sound* of the word that follows is a *consonant*, use 'a': a hotel, a style, a union.
- Follow the same rules for acronyms and initialisms: an ASIO agent, an MOU, an HSR, a TV, a UNESCO agreement.

Acronyms and initialisms

- Use acronyms (COAG, ASIO) or initialisms (NAI) sparingly and only when necessary—do not introduce an acronym if it is not used later.
- Write acronyms and initialisms in full when first used in a document unless they're well known (GST, ABC).
- Use capital letters with no full stops or spaces.

Brackets

- Brackets are used to set apart or interject text within other text.
- Do not use brackets within brackets.

11.1 Bulleted lists

Full sentences

There are three important guiding principles when writing full sentences in lists:

- A colon should be at the end of the introductory sentence.
- The first word of each sentence should begin with a capital letter.
- Every sentence should end with a full stop.

Continuation of a sentence

Start a bullet point with lower case if it is a continuation of a sentence.

Separate several facts or statements by listing them with the correct punctuation:

- the items in the list will start with lower case
- the end of each item does not have a semicolon, and
- the last item will finish with a full stop.

Sentence fragments

Assistance is available in several forms:

- monetary assistance
- equipment modifications
- advisory services.

11.2 Capitalisation

Capitalise:

- Safe Work Australia Members and references to particular Members, for example the Commonwealth Member
- job titles for specific people (e.g. Prime Minister)
- Parliament
- the words 'Commonwealth' or 'Federal' in the context of an official title (e.g. The Federal Court of Australia, the Australian Government)
- an Act or a Bill
- titles of specific Acts or Bills
- job titles for an individual (e.g. Director, Strategic Policy)
- the first letter in a heading.

Don't capitalise:

- government (unless it is used in an official title, for example the Australian Government)
- minister (unless part of a specific job title, for example Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, or when used after the first instance for example, The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations has requested a new brief. The Minister is attending the meeting tomorrow to discuss the brief.)
- program (unless part of a specific title)
- memorandum of understanding (unless part of a specific title, for example Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and Safe Work Australia)
- department or agency (unless referring to a specific one, for example Department of Employment and Workplace Relations)
- job titles for a generic role holder (not an individual)
- state and territory (unless part of a proper noun, for example the New South Wales State Government)
- the word team when referring to the organisational structure, for example Communications team, not Communications Team
- the word intranet.

Government

Use the 'Australian Government' in the first instance and 'the Government' thereafter. When referring to previous government, use a lower case 'g'. In the context of Government funding, use 'Commonwealth Government funding'.

Federal

Use an initial capital letter for 'federal' when it forms part of a formal name. Don't capitalise it when it is used as an adjective:

- the Federal Court of Australia.
- federal issues.

Capitalisation and names of organisations

In the full official names of organisations and other bodies such as assemblies and conferences, all words other than articles, prepositions and conjunctions are given initial capitals:

- the Department of Finance and Administration
- the Academy of the Humanities

When names are abbreviated to just the generic element for subsequent references, leave them uncapitalised:

- the Department of Finance and Administration ... the department
- the University of Western Australia ... the university
- the Australian Ballet Company ... the company
- the Australian Broadcasting Corporation ... the corporation
- Gundagai Shire Council ... the shire council ... the council

In contrast, when the name of the organisation or body is abbreviated but retains some specific elements, keep the capitals:

- the Reserve Bank of Australia ... the Reserve Bank ... the bank
- the National Press Club ... the Press Club ... the club
- the National Gallery of Australia ... the National Gallery ... the gallery

Government programs and agreements

The names of government programs, protocols and similar agreements should capitalise full names and abbreviations that remain specific but not abbreviations that consist of the generic element only. For example:

- the National Hepatitis C Action Plan ... the Hepatitis C Action Plan ... the action plan
- the National Program for the Centenary of Federation ... the Centenary of Federation Program ... the program
- the Greater Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative ... the Artesian Basin Initiative ... the initiative

- the International Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Ships... the convention
- the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement ... the Housing Agreement ...the agreement

11.3 Colons

Used to introduce bullet points or other lists, to separate a title from a subtitle and to indicate a ratio.

11.4 Commas

- Commas separate ideas and clarify meaning.
- Do not overuse commas and do not use commas in dates, numbers or address blocks.
- Commas are generally not used before ‘and’, ‘that’ or ‘but’.

11.5 Contractions

- Use *and* rather than & in all instances unless it is a registered name or in a table where space is limited.
- Use e.g. and i.e. where space is limited. Use *for example* and ‘*that is*’ in text. Do not use a comma before e.g. or i.e.
- Spell out ‘it is’, ‘do not’ and ‘cannot’ unless it is an informal communication.

11.6 Dashes (hyphens, en and em rules)

Note: En and Em dashes can also be added manually using the Insert > Symbols menu in Microsoft Word.

Symbol	Title	Purpose	Example	Alt keystrokes using number pad
-	Hyphen	Connects the parts of a compound word or the parts of a divided word. Hyphens are generally used between compound adjectives. A compound adjective is an adjective that is made up of more than one word.	co-worker Part-time work, well-known author When the same words follow a noun, or are used as an adverb, a hyphen is usually not required. e.g I work part time, the author is well known.	Minus
–	En dash	A linking device for spans of time or associations between words.	2009–10, August–September. If there are numbers on each side of the en dash, do not use spaces. If the en dash is linking more than one word, use spaces on either side. The Alice Springs – Darwin train project Spaced en dashes create a pause in a sentence to add extra meaning, just as commas and brackets do.	Ctrl + Minus
—	Em Dash	Indicates a break in thought or sentence structure. Spaced en dashes are Australian government style and should be used in digital content. You can use 2 em dashes for some quoted speech and deliberate omissions.	‘Any more questions before —’ The deed, signed by —, was legally binding. [The double em dashes show an interruption in a quotation.]	Ctrl + Alt + Minus

11.7 Dates and times

- Tuesday 22 February 2024, not Tuesday 22nd February
- Instead of 'from 1 Oct' use 'on or after 1 Oct'
- 2023–24 not 2023-2024
- 10 am, 4.30 pm, 9.30–11.30 am
- midnight, not 00:00

11.8 Full stops

Do not use a full stop after:

- titles of books, periodicals and poems
- headings
- page headers and footers
- display lists that comprise short items and follow directly after a heading without an introductory phrase
- captions that are not complete sentences
- index entries
- acronyms, initialisms or symbols
- honorifics or titles, for example Dr and Mrs
- abbreviations and contractions

11.9 Headings

- Titles, main headings and subheadings should use sentence case (only the first word begins with a capital letter)

11.10 Italics

Use italics for:

- the full name of an Act or Determination, for example the *Public Service Act 2023*
- titles of books, reports and periodicals such as journals and newspapers, surveys, reports and publication discussion papers
- don't italicise the titles of Bills before Parliament, regulations, Awards and the names of departmental or government programs.

11.11 Labels for figures, images and tables

- Label all figures, images and tables.
- The label should consist of the word Figure or Table in bold, the first letter capitalised, a number and then a descriptor without a full stop (**Figure 5** Embedded mesh, **Table 17** Elevated work box).

11.12 Measurement

- Use numerals and spell out measurements (4 metres squared or 10 kilograms), except in tables. There are instances where this rule can be disregarded such as when using WES measurements.
- If the measurement is more than one word, for example kilometres per hour, then spell it out the first time it is used with the abbreviation km/hr. From then on, abbreviate.

11.13 Money

- Express as numerals combined with symbols (\$100, \$0.50, US\$299)
- Don't use decimals unless cents are included (\$75.50 or \$75)
- Millions may be expressed as either \$1,000,000, \$1 million or \$1m
- Write out 'cents' in full and still use numerals (calls will cost 4 cents per minute from a landline)

11.14 Numbers

- In general text, the rule is:
 - Use numerals for '2' and above.
 - Hence, write the numbers 'zero' and 'one' in words.
- Follow the same rules for writing numbers in headings and subheadings.
- Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence (Thirty people...).
- Always use numerals for numbers that are followed by a measurement symbol (5km, 330C).
- Use a comma after the first digit of a four-digit or greater number, except for years, page numbers and addresses/postcodes (1,500 reports, 1820 AD).
- Spell out millions and billions (5 million).

11.15 Percentages

- Use the percentage sign next to a numeral in text. Don't use a space between the number and the percentage sign. (There are 30% more....)
- Do not start a sentence with the percentage, reword the sentence or use words:
 - Fifty-five per cent of the council's revenue came from rates.
 - Rates accounted for 55% of revenue.

11.16 Phone numbers

- Use spacing and no brackets for area codes e.g. 02 6212 3456, 0412 345 678
- Use nonbreaking spaces. To create a nonbreaking space, hold down Ctrl and Shift as you press the spacebar.

11.17 Quotation marks

Use single quotation marks:

- for direct speech or quotations
- for unusual or technical terms.

11.18 Quotation marks and punctuation

If the punctuation is part of the quote, keep it inside the quote mark. If not, place the punctuation outside the quote mark.

For example:

'Are you going to apply for the job?' the supervisor asked.

Telegraphy has been called 'the Victorian Internet'; it was the first practical application of electricity.

11.19 Referencing and citations

- Use the Author-date referencing system.
- In text citation (author surname, year of publication).
- Separate multiple in text references with a semi colon (Smith, 2012; Hughes, 2014).
- For more than three authors, the in text citation should only show the first listed author followed by 'et al.'

11.20 Semicolons

- Semicolons are used to link clauses. We expect ministerial approval tomorrow; the work can then start next week.
- Semicolons are used to separate items in sentences that contain lists which have commas or 'and' within them. There are offices in Sydney, Australia; Wellington, New Zealand; and Vancouver, Canada. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development; the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science; and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
- Do not use semicolons at the end of dot points or when you should be using a colon.

11.21 Slashes

- A forward slash means 'or'.
- When using forward slashes do not use spaces between the numbers or letters. For example: agreed/not agreed, male/female/intersex
- Do not use and/or.

11.22 Spaces after full stops

Use only one space after every full stop.

11.23 Step lists

Use steps to guide a user through a process. Numbered steps end in a full stop.

Managing work health and safety risks involves four steps:

1. identifying hazards
2. assessing risks
3. controlling risks
4. reviewing control measures.

11.24 That or which?

Generally, use 'which' for parenthetical non-defining clauses and 'that' for defining clauses.

'The tree, which had no leaves, was a birch'. The leaflessness of the tree is incidental to the real meaning of the sentence.

'The tree that had no leaves was a birch'. The leaflessness of the tree is a defining characteristic as it helps us to distinguish that tree from other trees.

12. Writing for web **Links to documents and pages**

- **Links should be labelled with descriptive titles** to let the reader know what the destination page or document contains.
Use: The results of the Australian Work Exposures Study are now available.
Instead of: Results of the study can be found here.
- **To link to files, such as PDF or DOCX**, add the format and the size of the file in brackets within the link e.g. Safe Work Australia Organisational Chart (PDF 49KB)

12.2 Headings and heading levels

- Use topic based headings rather than question based headings.
Use: "Paying invoices", instead of: "How do I pay an invoice?"
- Use relevant heading levels in order.
Use: "H1, H2, H3", instead of: "H1, H2, H5, H7"
- Do not use acronyms in headings, spell them out.

12.3 Tables

Tables on webpages reduce the accessibility of content, so use tables minimally, they should only be used for tabular data or if there is a large amount of information that can't be easily formatted in another way. Use headings, styles, dot points and introductory content where possible rather than tables.

Use:

Two sessions on workplace safety topics will be held this week.

Labelling Hazardous Chemicals with Bob Smith

2 February 2024 – Conference room 1

Disposal of Hazardous Chemicals with Sally Snow

2 February 2024 - Conference room 2

Instead of:

Session Title	Host	Date	Room
Labelling Hazardous Chemicals	Bob Smith	2 February 2024	Conference room 1
Disposal of Hazardous Chemicals	Sally Snow	2 February 2024	Conference room 2

If a table is used a text summary of the table's contents must be provided. For example: "List of training sessions with host and location details".

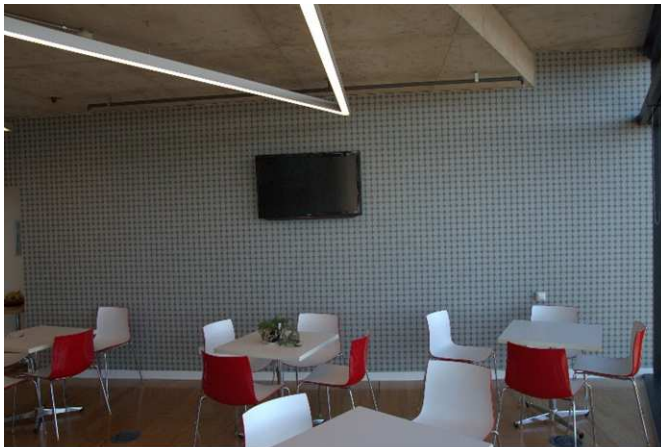
12.4 Bold and italics

The use of bold and italics should be kept to a minimum and only used for publication titles or a few words in a row, never for whole sentences. This is because text becomes more difficult to read on smaller devices (for example on smartphones). For the same reason bold and italics should not be used at the same time.

12.5 Images

Only use images if they help the user.

- Type of images include:
 - photographs and decorative images
 - charts, graphs and maps
 - diagrams
 - drawings
 - icons.
- Information shown in an image should also be reflected in content. For example, if you have an image of a pie chart the information provided in that chart must also be available in the surrounding text on that page.



- Alternate text must be provided for all images, for example alternate text for the following image could be “Lunch room with television mounted on the wall, surrounded by empty tables”.

Logo variations



safe work australia



safe work
australia

stacked



safe work australia



safe work
australia

in-line



logo-mark



word-mark

Allowed 2-colour variations



Allowed 1-colour variations



Colour palette

Blue

HEX: #2B0A99
RGB: 43 10 153
CMYK: 100 100 0 0

Primary colour

Notes:

This colour palette has been optimised for vibrancy on screen as screens are where the majority of our content is consumed.

The logo is only ever to be coloured with Blue from the Primary Palette, or black/white as per the above approved colour variations. A colour from the secondary palette is never to be used for the logo.

Colours from the secondary palette may be used as a primary colour or feature colour in significant offshoot projects, for example the Purple in the secondary palette is the primary colour in our consultation branding, the Yellow is the primary colour in our National Safe Work Month Campaign branding, and Red is the feature colour in our Data website branding.

Navy	Light blue	Purple	Red	Yellow	Green
HEX: #071544 RGB: 7 21 68 CMYK: 100 95 35 50	HEX: #4877E0 RGB: 72 119 224 CMYK: 80 55 0 0	HEX: #490061 RGB: 73 12 97 CMYK: 80 100 25 25	HEX: #E80C30 RGB: 232 12 48 CMYK: 0 100 90 0	HEX: #F7BB2F RGB: 247 187 47 CMYK: 5 30 95 0	HEX: #B5CB34 RGB: 247 187 47 CMYK: 5 30 95 0

Secondary colours

Fonts

Aa Aa
Gotham book

Aa Aa Medium

Aa Aa Bold

Aa Aa Black

Primary

Aa Aa
Arial

Aa Aa Bold

Aa Black

Secondary/MS

Aa Aa
Montserrat Regular

Aa Aa Medium

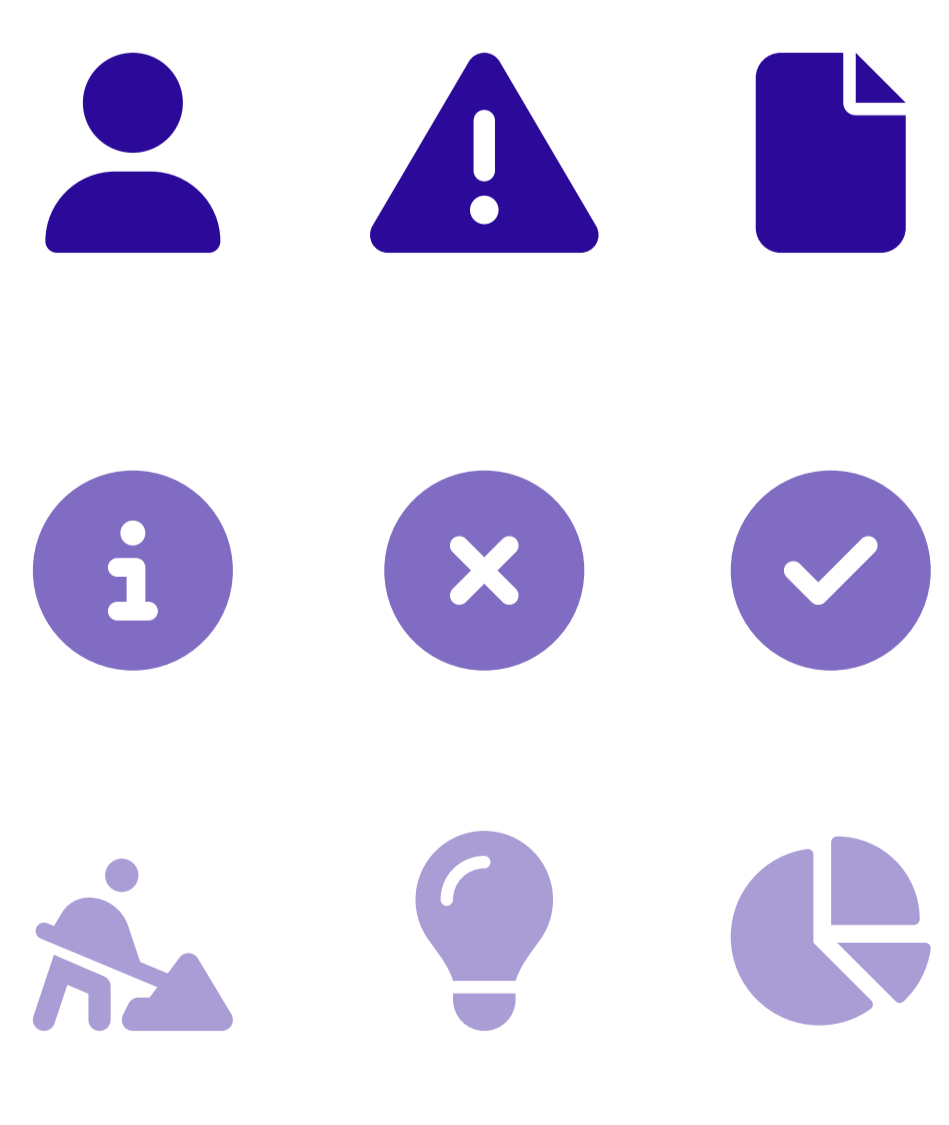
Aa Aa Semi-Bold

Aa Aa Bold

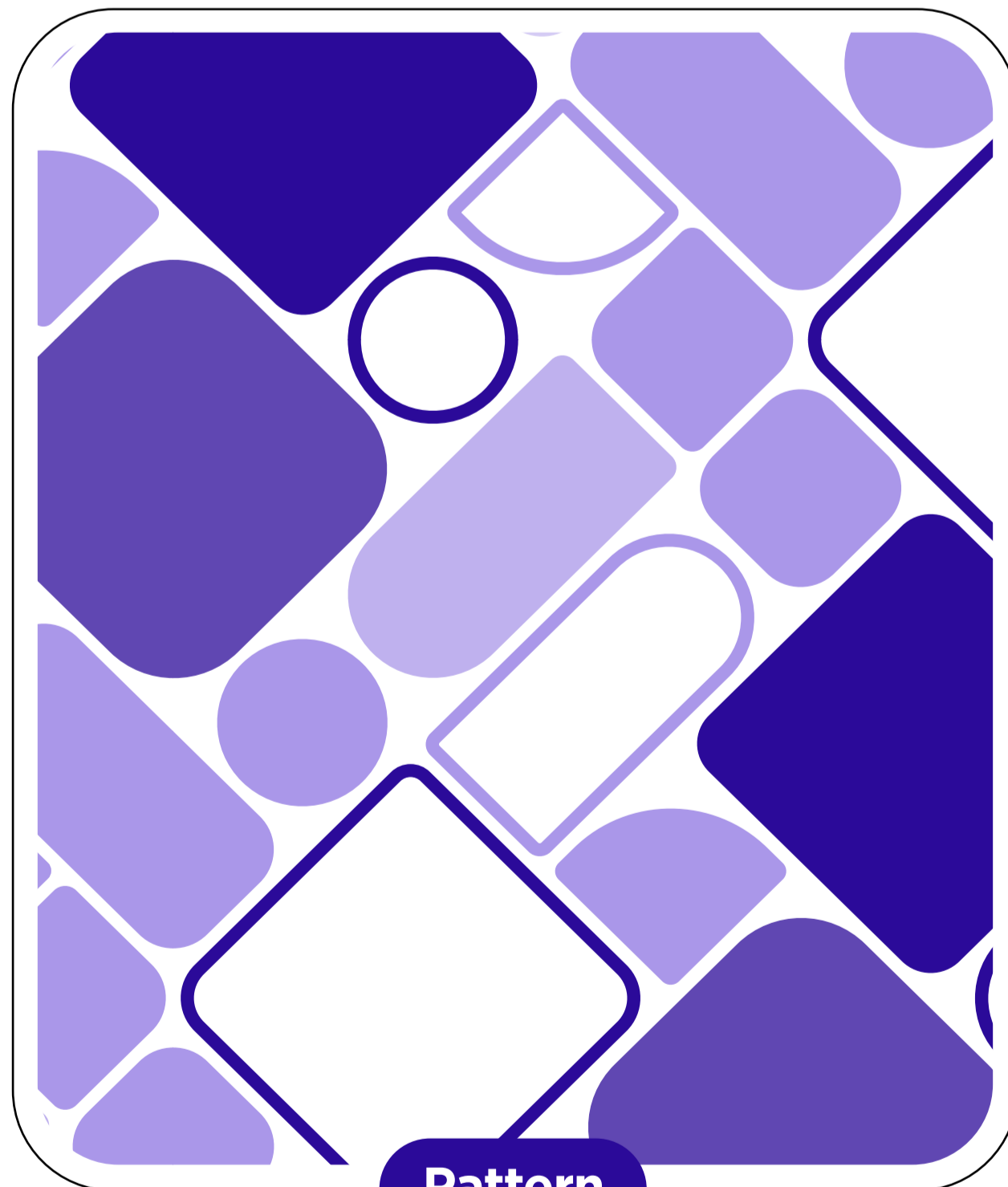
Web

Elements


<https://fontawesome.com/v5/search?o=r&m=free>



FontAwesome icons



Pattern



misc



Documents

Corporate documents/templates

Infographics/Factsheets

Assets

Corporate promotion

Video call backgrounds

Business cards (digital)

Pull-up banner

Social media assets

account profile logo

banners

Primary



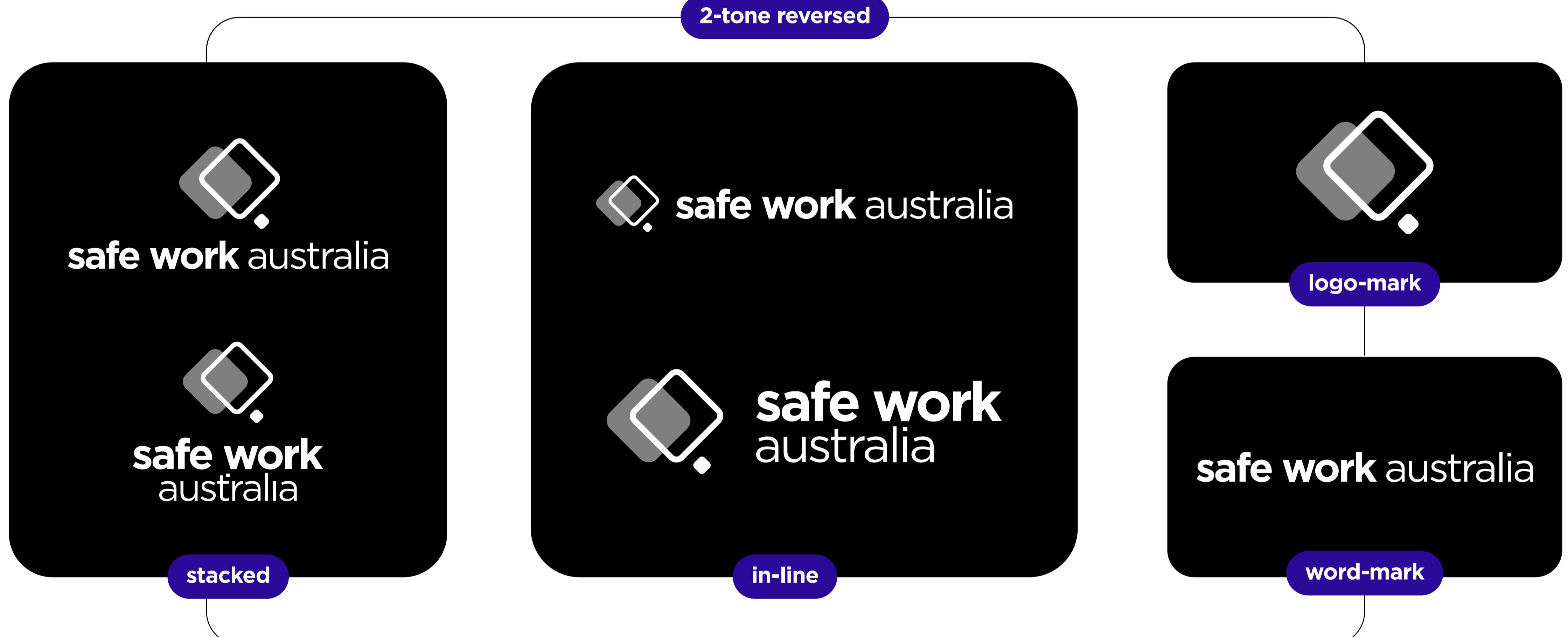
Primary reversed



2-tone black



2-tone reversed



Allowed 1-colour variations

