Student workbook

BSBWHS304

Participate effectively in WHS communication and processes

­

**TAFE NSW would like to pay our respect and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Land, Rivers and Sea. We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Elders, both past and present of all Nations.**

Version: 1.1

Date created: 25 March 2019

Date modified: 2 October 2019

For queries contact: Technology and Business Services SkillsPoint

© TAFE NSW 2019  
RTO Provider Number 90003 | CRICOS Provider Code: 00591E

This resource can be found in the TAFE NSW Learning Bank.

The content in this document is copyright © TAFE NSW 2019 and should not be reproduced without the permission of TAFE NSW. Information contained in this document is correct at time of printing: 16 October 2019. For current information please refer to our website or your teacher as appropriate.

Contents

[Icon legends 5](#_Toc22131375)

[Getting started 6](#_Toc22131376)

[What will I learn by completing this workbook? 6](#_Toc22131377)

[Topic 1: WHS requirements 7](#_Toc22131378)

[1.1 Overview 8](#_Toc22131379)

[1.2 Legislation 8](#_Toc22131380)

[Videos: WHS laws 8](#_Toc22131381)

[Interpreting the legislation 10](#_Toc22131382)

[Important terms 10](#_Toc22131383)

[1.3 Codes of practice 11](#_Toc22131384)

[1.4 Policies and procedures 11](#_Toc22131385)

[Work Health Safety Management Systems 12](#_Toc22131386)

[Additional resources on WHSMS 13](#_Toc22131387)

[1.5 Standards 13](#_Toc22131388)

[Activity 1.1: Check your understanding of the WHS legislation 13](#_Toc22131389)

[1.6 Principles of a safe workplace 14](#_Toc22131390)

[1.7 Sources of WHS information 15](#_Toc22131391)

[1.8 Using tools and techniques to obtain WHS information 16](#_Toc22131392)

[Additional resources on accessing information on the internet 16](#_Toc22131393)

[Using direct methods 16](#_Toc22131394)

[Using recorded documentation 17](#_Toc22131395)

[Activity 1.2: Tools and techniques 18](#_Toc22131396)

[Topic 2: Consultation and communication 19](#_Toc22131397)

[2.1 Overview 20](#_Toc22131398)

[2.2 Consultation and participation processes 20](#_Toc22131399)

[Videos: SafeWork NSW 21](#_Toc22131400)

[Consultation processes 23](#_Toc22131401)

[Participation processes 23](#_Toc22131402)

[Engaging staff members with WHS 23](#_Toc22131403)

[Activity 2.1: Encouraging participation in WHS 24](#_Toc22131404)

[2.3 WHS duties, rights, and responsibilities 24](#_Toc22131405)

[PCBUs 24](#_Toc22131406)

[Officers 25](#_Toc22131407)

[Workers and other persons 25](#_Toc22131408)

[Health and safety committees and representatives 26](#_Toc22131409)

[Video: A Day in the Life of a Health and Safety Representative 26](#_Toc22131410)

[Your role 27](#_Toc22131411)

[Additional resources on WHS procedures 28](#_Toc22131412)

[Activity 2.2: Consultation and participation 28](#_Toc22131413)

[2.4 Barriers to WHS consultation and participation 29](#_Toc22131414)

[Removing barriers to WHS consultation and participation 30](#_Toc22131415)

[Video: Problem solving techniques 30](#_Toc22131416)

[Activity 2.3: Barriers to WHS consultation and participation 31](#_Toc22131417)

[2.5 Communication skills and strategies 31](#_Toc22131418)

[Videos: Communication skills 31](#_Toc22131419)

[Communication processes 32](#_Toc22131420)

[Types of communication 32](#_Toc22131421)

[Topic 3: WHS issues 33](#_Toc22131422)

[3.1 Overview 34](#_Toc22131423)

[3.2 WHS meetings 34](#_Toc22131424)

[Work group meetings 34](#_Toc22131425)

[Additional resources on meetings 35](#_Toc22131426)

[Activity 3.1: WHS meeting agenda items 36](#_Toc22131427)

[3.3 Raising WHS issues and supporting others 36](#_Toc22131428)

[Activity 3.2: Meeting procedures 37](#_Toc22131429)

[3.4 Recording discussions and outcomes 37](#_Toc22131430)

[Records of work group meetings 38](#_Toc22131431)

[Activity 3.3: Supporting staff members 38](#_Toc22131432)

[3.5 Following up outcomes 38](#_Toc22131433)

[Scenario 1 39](#_Toc22131434)

[Scenario 2 39](#_Toc22131435)

[3.6 Communicating discussions and outcomes to others 40](#_Toc22131436)

[Activity 3.4: Forms of communication 41](#_Toc22131437)

[Summary 42](#_Toc22131438)

[Image attributions 43](#_Toc22131439)

# Icon legends

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon | Description |
|  | **Practice activity**  Learning activities help you to gain a clear understanding of the content in this resource. It is important for you to complete these activities, as they will enhance your learning. The activities will prepare you for assessments. |
|  | **Collaboration**  You will have opportunities to collaborate with others during your study. This could involve group activities such as mini projects or discussions that will enable you to explore and expand your understanding of the content. |
|  | **Self-check**  An activity that allows you to check your learning progress. The self-check activity gives you the opportunity to identify areas of learning where you could improve. If you identify these, you could review the relevant content or activities. |
|  | **Resources (required and suggested)**  Additional resources throughout this workbook such as chapters from textbooks, online articles, videos etc. These are supplementary resources, which will enhance your learning experience and may help you complete the unit. |
|  | **Assessment task**  At different stages throughout the workbook, after you have completed the readings and activities, you may be prompted to complete one or more of your assessment tasks. |
|  | **Video**  Videos will give you a deeper insight into the content covered in this workbook. If you are working from a printed version, you will need to look these up using the URL provided. |

# Getting started

## What will I learn by completing this workbook?

This workbook has been developed for the unit of competency BSBWHS304 Participate effectively in WHS communication and processes.

Successfully completing this unit of competency will give you the skills and knowledge to participate in work health and safety (WHS) communication and consultation processes.

In this workbook, you’ll learn about:

* legislation and other requirements for WHS consultation and participation
* the barriers to effective WHS consultation and participation processes, and ways to resolve them
* WHS duties, rights and responsibilities
* identifying sources of, and how to obtain, WHS information
* strategies for communicating WHS issues and discussions
* raising WHS issues and supporting others
* recording and following up on WHS discussions and outcomes.

Each topic includes opportunities to check your progress and understanding, as well as activities that will help you to complete the formal assessments.

The activities throughout this resource will assist you in your learning. These activities don’t form a part of your final assessment, however they’ll contribute to your understanding of each topic area.

There are three topics to complete within this workbook. They are:

1. WHS requirements
2. Consultation and communication
3. WHS issues.

Topic 1: WHS requirements

­

# 1.1 Overview

Work health and safety (WHS) is the discipline concerned with protecting the health and safety of all **stakeholders** in the workplace (management, workers, customers, visitors) from exposure to hazards and risks resulting from work activities. Consultative (or participative) arrangements are implemented in workplaces to inform those involved in WHS matters, seek their input, and provide an opportunity for them to participate in decisions that may impact on their health and safety at work.

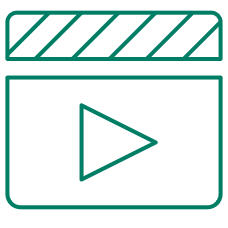
A **stakeholder** is a person, group or organisation that has an interest or concern in an organisation.

Regardless of the industry in which you work, there is legislation that stipulates the requirements for establishing a safe work environment.

In this topic you’ll learn about:

* WHS legislation, codes of practice, policies and procedures, standards
* sources of WHS information
* obtaining WHS information.

# 1.2 Legislation

 Watch

## Videos: WHS laws

Watch these short videos get an overview of the WHS laws for Australian workplaces:

[Workplace health and safety in Australia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nygEiM5pAYQ)(RiskTeq 02.32 mins)

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nygEiM5pAYQ)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nygEiM5pAYQ

[WHS law changes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AD7sazeEO8) (SafeWork NSW 01.56 mins)

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AD7sazeEO8)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AD7sazeEO8

For many years there was a variety of different work health and safety legislation that applied to each state in Australia. In most states, these were replaced by the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2011A00137) and [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2017/404), which has been adopted in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania, and South Australia.

Refer to the [SafeWork Australia](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/) website for further details regarding Western Australian and Victorian legislation.

The aim of this approach is to ensure uniformity and consistency across the country in order to significantly reduce the rate and cost of work-related accidents, incidents and illnesses.

**Note:** The term Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) has now been replaced in most cases by the use of Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) in recognition of the change in the legislation.

In NSW, [SafeWork NSW](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/) administers and provides advice on the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017. The Regulation sets out the **standards** that must be met for specific hazards and risks, licences for specific activities, and record keeping.

The learning in this unit is primarily based on the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. If this doesn’t apply where you live, you’ll find many of the same types of principles apply. You may wish to visit your state-based legislation and regulations for further relevant detail.

## Interpreting the legislation

The Act is more than 200 pages long and the Regulation forms a document of over 700 pages, which is why the Australian government prepared condensed versions for all to read and understand in a more straightforward manner. These are:

* the [Guide to the model WHS Act](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/guide-model-work-health-and-safety-act), which provides an overview of the Act and is designed to help people understand their health and safety duties, rights and responsibilities at work
* the [Guide to the model WHS Regulations](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/guide-model-work-health-and-safety-regulations), which provides an overview of the structure of the regulation and is designed to help people identify what duties or rights are contained in each part of the regulation.

## Important terms

The WHS Act 2011 includes references to some new terms:

* **Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)**: A PCBU is the legal entity (individual person or organisation) operating a business or undertaking, whether for profit or not. This includes employers and sole traders.
* **Officer**: An officer is a person with some authority in an organisation, such as a Director or Secretary of a corporation, or has the capacity to make decisions affecting the business of the organisation.
* **Worker**: Workers include employees, contractors or subcontractors and their employees, outworkers, apprentices or trainees, students gaining work experience, as well as volunteers.

# 1.3 Codes of practice

Safe Work Australia also developed a number of [model Codes of Practice](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation/model-whs-laws#model-codes-of-practice) as part of the package of harmonised WHS laws. Codes of practice are practical guides to achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare required under the WHS Act and the WHS Regulations.

Examples of Codes of Practice include the following:

* How to manage work health and safety risks
* Hazardous manual tasks
* Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
* Confined spaces
* Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
* How to safely remove asbestos.

# 1.4 Policies and procedures

**Policies** are broad general guidelines based on the organisation’s mission, values and goals. They guide the management of an organisation on its behaviour and attitudes to major issues. Future plans and strategies are drawn up from these policies. Many of the organisation’s policies are created in order to conform to legislation.

WHS policy outlines how employees should work and participate in creating a safe and healthy work environment.

**Procedures** are policies at a lower level. They contain a list of steps that should be performed in a particular order to achieve a specific purpose. They tell staff how to do something in a way that is acceptable to the organisation.

WHS procedures explain the safe and healthy way to perform work tasks, such as how to operate a piece of machinery or equipment. For example:

* changing the toner in a photocopier
* lifting or moving heavy objects
* reporting faulty equipment
* performing workplace inspections.

Providing procedures helps everyone to work to company policy. Providing policies and procedures are part of an employer’s responsibility in providing a safe workplace, and it’s the employees’ responsibility to follow these policies and procedures.

## Work Health Safety Management Systems

A Work Health Safety Management System (WHSMS) is designed to help organisations systematically manage WHS in an organisation. It describes how an organisation plans to:

* define its WHS policy and commitment to the WHSMS
* fulfil its WHS policy, objectives and targets
* ensure these plans work in practice
* measure and evaluate its WHS performance
* review and improve the WHSMS.

The purpose of a WHSMS is to:

* eliminate or reduce injury and illness to workers
* reduce costs associated with workplace accidents
* comply with WHS legislation to avoid penalties.

 Resources

## Additional resources on WHSMS

To see what’s contained in a typical WHSMS, look at this example from the simulated organisation DataTrust:

* [DataTrust Work Health and Safety Management System](https://share.tafensw.edu.au/share/items/4e2424f3-024d-4bf1-b865-206ea679190e/0/?attachment.uuid=39c4f7dc-1e70-48e6-a866-cf00b29ca0c8)

# 1.5 Standards

In addition to the standards set out in the Regulation, there are standards that apply to WHSMS. These include the following (note that these standards are for sale, however you can view a preview on these pages; they may also be available in a library):

* [AS/NZS 4804:2001](https://infostore.saiglobal.com/en-au/Standards/Product-Details-116029_SAIG_AS_AS_242495/?ProductID=116029_SAIG_AS_AS_242495) Occupational health and safety management systems – General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques
  + This provides guidance for organisations who want to develop and implement a WHSMS or improve an existing system.
* [AS/NZS 4801:2001](https://infostore.saiglobal.com/en-au/Standards/Product-Details-116036_SAIG_AS_AS_242514/?ProductID=116036_SAIG_AS_AS_242514) Occupational health and safety management systems – Specification with guidance for use
  + This establishes a framework primarily to enable independent audits and reviews of an organisation’s WHSMS and should be used in conjunction with AS/NZS 4804:2001.

 Practice activity

## Activity 1.1: Check your understanding of the WHS legislation

Read the following questions and answer each carefully. Click the box in the answer column of the table to select your answer choice.

1. What is the name of the WHS legislation that applies in NSW?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| # | Choices | Answer |
|  | Model WHS Act |  |
|  | WHS Act 2011 No 10 |  |
|  | WHS Codes of Practice |  |

1. The term 'Worker' in the WHS legislation includes employees, volunteers and students doing work experience.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| # | Choices | Answer |
|  | True |  |
|  | False |  |

# 1.6 Principles of a safe workplace

The current WHS laws may have changed the way health and safety is now managed in the workplace, but the basics of keeping the workplace safe remain. The essential principles of a safe workplace include the following:

* Management commitment: PCBUs should ensure that the ongoing management of health and safety matters is performed effectively in their workplace
* Mandatory consultation: All PCBUs are required to consult with workers in their workplace
* Risk management: General risk and workplace management must be applied to every business or undertaking
* Training and instruction: Suitable and adequate information, training and instruction, which is easily understood and necessary, should be provided to all workers by the PCBU
* Reporting safety: Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) have a responsibility to assist workers and have the power to represent them in relation to WHS matters
* Return to work and workers compensation: A PCBU must have a current workers compensation insurance policy, an injury reporting system, and an effective return to work program.

# 1.7 Sources of WHS information

To be able to effectively contribute to WHS consultation and participation processes, you’ll need to identify where to obtain relevant information. This may include the following:

* Audit results:
  + Workplace audit inspections, to see if previous WHS committee decisions have been carried out
  + Risk analysis outcomes, which indicate the likelihood and impact of any known risk within the organisation
* Industry bodies and employer groups
* First aid records, hazard, incident and investigation reports can provide valuable historical data
* Regulatory authorities (for codes of practice, legislation and standards) e.g. [NSW legislation](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/)
* Manufacturers' manuals and specifications available at the workplace or online
* Minutes of meetings from incident investigations, which allow you to consider how the same circumstances are avoided in the future
* Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and registers
  + The organisation should keep a register of all hazardous substances used at the workplace; any associated SDSs should be linked/attached
* WHS professional bodies and specialists e.g. [SafeWork NSW](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/)
* Reports, which cover a specific topic in more detail
* Unions e.g. [Victorian Trades Hall Council OHS Reps](https://www.ohsrep.org.au/),
* Websites, journals, and newsletters, for general reference material
* Workplace inspections, to observe the employee’s work processes and environment.

 Resources

To find out more, go online and have a look at these links:

* [Safe Work Australia](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/)
* [SafeWork NSW](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/)
* [Comcare](https://www.comcare.gov.au/) (Federal Government)
* [Australian Legal Information Institute](https://www.austlii.edu.au/)
* [Standards Australia](https://www.standards.org.au)

# 1.8 Using tools and techniques to obtain WHS information

There are many tools and techniques that allow you to keep up to date about WHS information. This will often involve accessing digital information available on the internet or an organisation’s intranet, so it will be useful to have basic skills in this area.

 Resources

## Additional resources on accessing information on the internet

If you need some basic tips on searching the internet, read through the web page [Seven Ways to Find What You Want on the Internet](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/internet-searching.htm) from Mind Tools.

## Using direct methods

Tools commonly used to communicate with workers or obtain information directly include the following:

* Meetings: Formal or informal meetings, such as Health and Safety Committee (HSC) meetings, work group meetings (toolbox or coffee cup meetings), and general staff meetings.
* Interviews with workers: These can be useful techniques to discover underlying causes of near-misses, incidents or accidents. Workers may have relevant information of which they’re not aware until asked about.
* Surveys and suggestion boxes: These may also offer an effective way of gathering information directly from employees, customers or visitors to the workplace in an informal and voluntary manner.

## Using recorded documentation

Formally recorded documentation is varied and may include the following items:

* [Body mapping](https://www.ohsrep.org.au/part_1_body_mapping_rqatrtrsnhlyvo7ie5opew): This is a process used when a group of workers performs the same tasks (such as using hot pans for cooking in a commercial kitchen). A body map is a large outline of the human body (usually front and back) on which colour-coded markings indicate possible workplace-related injuries that may be an issue in a particular work area (such as burns to the hands in the commercial kitchen). Red markings may be used for cuts on a body, yellow may show burns, blue may indicate bruises, and so on.
* Walkthrough surveys and workplace inspections: These are a common procedure for highlighting identifiable hazards around the workplace.
* Hazard identification checklists: These can be used by all workers in their work area.
* Hazard reports: These are part of a more systematic approach to hazard reporting and could include the above-mentioned checklists. Once completed, the reports are then given to a WHS officer or HSR.
* Incident or accident reports: These should be completed as soon as possible after the accident. Repeat accidents, incidents or near misses would highlight areas requiring an investigation. Their repetition could indicate there may be a problem with a particular piece of equipment or a workplace procedure.
* Plant and equipment maintenance records: These are also used to identify if there is a repetition of any particular issue or if an accident was caused by an equipment fault.
* Material safety data sheets (MSDS): These should be available in any workplace where chemicals and hazardous substances are used. Workplace practices must comply with MSDSs, and if not, should be addressed immediately.
* Safe work method statements (SWMS): These should be available for all workplace procedures and compared on a regular basis. Workers should complete their tasks following the methods outlined in the procedure and supervisors should ensure that they do so by completing these comparisons regularly.

Another method of collecting WHS information effectively is to review, analyse and compare any of the recorded documentation previously gathered. This could include reviews of:

* records of WHS meetings
* registers of hazardous substances
* reported hazards
* reported near misses, incidents and accidents
* results of surveys and suggestion boxes.

 Practice activity

## Activity 1.2: Tools and techniques

1. Select two tools or techniques listed above. In a sentence or two, locate and describe an example for each that relates to your industry.
2. What information is typically found on a safety data sheet (SDS)?

Topic 2: Consultation and communication

­

# 2.1 Overview

Consultation on WHS issues is an important part of establishing a safe work environment in any workplace. Consultation in a work environment is the two-way exchange of information between management and their workers.

Under the WHS Act 2011, all PCBUs are required to consult with workers in their workplace.

In this topic you’ll learn about:

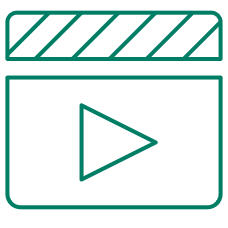
* consultation and participation processes
* WHS duties, rights, and responsibilities
* barriers to WHS consultation and participation and how to resolve them
* communication skills and strategies.

# 2.2 Consultation and participation processes

Meaningful consultation can lead to fewer workplace injuries and gives everyone the opportunity to:

* discuss and share their health and safety concerns
* identify safety hazards and risks
* find and implement practical solutions
* contribute to the decision-making process
* communicate outcomes in a timely manner.

Working together in a consultative relationship is the best way to ensure ongoing improvements to WHS matters. The organisation’s policies and procedures, including the WHSMS, can be updated as a result of this consultation. Staff members who follow specific processes as part of their job are in the best position to comment on those processes, so it’s important that their views are considered.

 Watch

## Videos: SafeWork NSW

Watch this series of three short videos SafeWork NSW developed to outline the basic requirements of consultation and participation processes in Australian workplaces:

[Creating a safe working environment](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCaeHrkRuBs&index=2&list=PLtTlGRDYT1XsO3i9Da0e3oKcvCCLP5htW) (YouTube 02:04 mins)

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCaeHrkRuBs)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCaeHrkRuBs

[Management commitment](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iDFktRjdXU&index=3&list=PLtTlGRDYT1XsO3i9Da0e3oKcvCCLP5htW) (YouTube 02:26 mins)

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iDFktRjdXU)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iDFktRjdXU

[Consultation requirements](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN8SVJJJR6A&list=PLtTlGRDYT1XsO3i9Da0e3oKcvCCLP5htW&index=4) (YouTube 02:30 mins)

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN8SVJJJR6A)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN8SVJJJR6A

## Consultation processes

The organisation must make arrangements to meet workplace consultation obligations specified in WHS legislation, including:

* forming WHS and other consultative and planning committees
* appointing WHS Representatives throughout the organisation
* ensuring employee and supervisor involvement in WHS activities, such as site inspections to identify problems and WHS audits to ensure remedial actions, have been carried out
* introducing procedures for reporting hazards (by any employee), raising awareness and addressing WHS issues
* conducting regular employee and workgroup meetings
* having processes in place for exchanging information and views on WHS hazards, risks and risk controls.

## Participation processes

The organisational processes must also:

* inform employees and other stakeholders of WHS matters
* seek input and offer the opportunity for stakeholders to participate in decisions that may impact on the WHS of the workplace.

## Engaging staff members with WHS

PCBUs should encourage their staff members to participate in WHS to improve their workplace. They should also act on the concerns raised by workers or their representatives. Workers should actively participate in the WHS process and value the opportunity to have input and be consulted about issues in their workplace.

Some tips for engaging staff members to participate in WHS include the following:

* Share all relevant WHS information with them, including outcomes of WHS matters
* Allow opportunities for them to express views or raise issues
* Allow opportunities for them to contribute to decision making
* Listen to and consider their views.

The communication strategies you use will also influence staff members. For example, a colourful, informal newsletter is likely to engage more readers than a dry, formal memo.

 Collaboration

## Activity 2.1: Encouraging participation in WHS

Discuss with your learner group some other ways that you could encourage work colleagues to participate in WHS. Have you seen something that you have found engaging?

# 2.3 WHS duties, rights, and responsibilities

The WHS Act places duties on three categories of people within the workplace:

* PCBUs
* Officers
* Workers and other persons at the workplace, such as visitors or customers.

For detailed information on PCBUs, officers, workers and others, refer to the interpretative guidelines available at [SafeWork NSW](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/home).

## PCBUs

The WHS Act requires all PCBUs to ensure, so far as is **reasonably practicable**, the health and safety of all workers in the workplace and any other person visiting the workplace.

This **primary duty of care** requires duty holders to ensure health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable, by eliminating or minimising risks to health and safety.

PCBUs also have a duty to consult with all other duty holders, including workers and their representatives, on all WHS matters that directly affect them.

It is the PCBU’s responsibility to:

* comply with legislation, awards, codes of practice and standards
* work with the WHS governing bodies to establish safe work practices
* observe WHS laws to guarantee a healthy and safe work environment for themselves, workers and any other person in the workplace
* act on any issues that workers, health and safety representatives or WHS committees raise
* communicate with workers and involve them in the decision-making process
* liaise with unions
* lead by example.

## Officers

Officers are those involved in making decisions affecting the business or undertaking, such as a company director or secretary.

Under the Act, the duty of care placed on officers is that of **due diligence**. Officers must ensure the PCBU meets their health and safety responsibilities. They’re also personally liable to undertake due diligence and they must be proactive.

In particular, officers have the responsibility to perform the following tasks:

* Acquire and keep up to date with knowledge of WHS matters
* Understand the nature of their business operations, hazards and risks
* Use appropriate resources to eliminate or minimise risk
* Verify identified risks and hazards are being appropriately controlled.

## Workers and other persons

The duty of care for workers and other persons (this includes customers and visitors to the workplace) is that of **reasonable care.** This means that while in the workplace they’re required to take reasonable care for their own safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.

Workers and others must also cooperate with any actions taken by their PCBU to comply with the WHS Act and Regulations.

Workers and others have the responsibility to:

* report hazards
* follow procedures, including using protective clothing and equipment
* complete accident reports as required
* participate in WHS training in the safe use of equipment
* keep up to date with any WHS changes
* work with the PCBU to keep the work environment safe and healthy.

## Health and safety committees and representatives

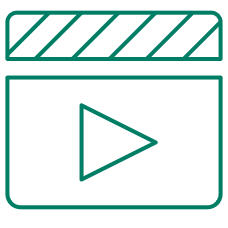
Under the law, PCBUs must consult workers via an **elected** HSC or HSR. Organisations with more than twenty employees must have an elected HSC. Management and employees form a committee to identify and resolve WHS issues, and develop and monitor safe systems and procedures.

Elected HSCs and HSRs have the responsibility to:

* represent workers and communicate their WHS concerns to management
* make suggestions and recommendations for improving health and safety in the workplace
* be involved in the decision-making process
* encourage WHS training
* enable participation in workplace design.

HSRs are also responsible for:

* workplace inspections
* accident investigations
* maintaining WHS records
* organising WHS training
* monitoring compliance with regulations
* monitoring rehabilitation programs
* handling workers’ compensation claims.

 Watch

## Video: A Day in the Life of a Health and Safety Representative

The following video from SafeWork NSW discusses the role of an HSR.

[A Day in the Life of a Health and Safety Representative](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2tgvsCtKuA) (YouTube 01:48 mins)

[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2tgvsCtKuA)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2tgvsCtKuA

## Your role

Every staff member within the organisation has a responsibility to provide input into the consultation processes. Even if your role is simply that of an employee, you must still meet the WHS expectations of that role. There are several things you can do to participate in WHS in your workplace:

* Participate in a health and safety committee
* Become a health and safety representative
* Attend WHS meetings, both formal and informal
* Be aware of the hazard identification process in the workplace and report any hazards to the relevant person, such as a safety officer
* Take part in safety inspections and audits of the workplace
* Follow directives from supervisors regarding safety issues and passing on this information to other workers on the job, when needed
* Provide opinions (based on your experience in the job) when requested by the employer or a member of the WHS committee
* Complete your duties in the safest manner possible.

If you’re appointed to a WHS position such as HSR, there will be extra duties such as:

* advising employees in the workplace on WHS issues in general and on WHS meeting outcomes
* monitoring and reporting on progress
* recording concerns of staff members
* making recommendations at WHS meetings to solve WHS issues
* participating in and contributing to formal WHS Committee meetings in any other way to improve WHS processes, e.g. reporting on feedback received from employees.

 Resources

## Additional resources on WHS procedures

The University of Wollongong’s [WHS framework](https://www.uow.edu.au/about/services/safe-at-work/whs-framework/) will help you understand how real-world organisations implement procedures that integrate WHS into the work environment. It also contains some excellent references to sources of WHS information.

 Practice activity

## Activity 2.2: Consultation and participation

Read the following questions and answer each carefully. Click the box in the answer column of the table to select your answer choice.

1. Consultation in WHS is the two-way exchange of:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| # | Choices | Answer |
|  | rules between management and their workers |  |
|  | information between management and their PCBU |  |
|  | information between management and their workers |  |

1. What level of duty of care does each WHS role have? Match the correct number in Column A to the correct letter from Column B in the Answer column.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Column A: WHS role | Answer | Column B: Level of duty of care |
| 1. PCBU |  | 1. Reasonable duty of care |
| 1. Officer |  | 1. Primary duty of care |
| 1. Worker |  | 1. Due diligence duty of care |

# 2.4 Barriers to WHS consultation and participation

The essential principle of consultation and participation processes is the effective communication of health and safety information between PCBUs and workers.

There are many barriers to how people communicate and consult with each other in the workplace and these can happen at any stage in the communication process. Effective communication involves identifying and overcoming these barriers to ensure that a clear and concise message in relation to WHS is conveyed to all stakeholders.

Common barriers to effective consultation and participation processes include:

* a lack of access to technology or information for all staff
* an unsupportive workplace culture or management
* cultural differences arising from ethnic diversity
* geographic dispersal of employees
* issues arising around the workplace and specific disabilities
* lack of a systematic approach to managing WHS in the workplace
* lack of support from the key management
* language and literacy levels of the workforce
* remote locations or worksites
* rosters or shift work
* unrealistic timeframes
* physical barriers such as personal protective equipment (PPE), noise and confined spaces
* past experiences and beliefs that have been formed
* the preoccupation of the listener at the time of the communication.

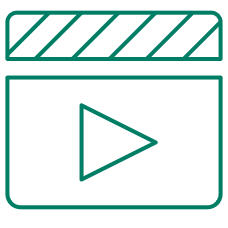
All workers need to have the opportunity to be consulted and participate in the decision-making process regarding their workplace safety, regardless of their location or circumstances. PCBUs must ensure that all workers have access to WHS consultative and participative arrangements so they can contribute to decision making.

## Removing barriers to WHS consultation and participation

In addressing these obstacles, workplaces should ensure workers have access to a variety of communication strategies. These can include:

* written communication, such as reports, newsletters or memos
* electronic communication using the internet, intranet websites, emails or social media tools
* face-to-face communication, such as work group meetings, personal communication with supervisors and management representatives
* special arrangements put in place for all workers to contribute to and participate in WHS discussions
* using interpreters and translators to ensure that all staff can understand the message.

This is a topic that would benefit from a discussion with staff members, ensuring that they could be involved and contribute to removing these barriers. Using problem-solving techniques such as brainstorming, design thinking, and mind mapping may assist in determining possible solutions.

 Watch

## Video: Problem solving techniques

The following course from LinkedIn Learning discusses different problem-solving techniques. You can watch the whole course, or just the parts that you need:

[Problem Solving Techniques](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/problem-solving-techniques/introduction?u=57684225&auth=true) (LinkedIn Learning 01:32 hrs)

 Practice activity

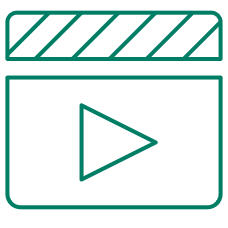
## Activity 2.3: Barriers to WHS consultation and participation

1. Choose three of the common barriers listed above. For each, describe how they could restrict successful WHS processes and what action you might take to remove the barrier. Discuss the results with your class.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Barriers to WHS consultation and participation | How could they restrict WHS consultation and participation processes? | What actions could you take? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

# 2.5 Communication skills and strategies

WHS consultation and participation requires communication skills, both verbal and written. This includes using effective listening and questioning techniques, presenting relevant information, and recording key information.

 Watch

## Videos: Communication skills

The following video collection and courses from LinkedIn Learning include information about communication strategies that you can use when communicating with your team about WHS. You can watch the whole course, or just the parts that you need:

* [Effective listening and questioning techniques](https://www.linkedin.com/checkpoint/enterprise/login/57684225?pathWildcard=57684225&application=learning&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.linkedin.com%2Flearning%2Fcollections%2F6585328392747446272%3Fu%3D57684225&auth=true) (LinkedIn Learning 07:32 mins)
* [Communication Foundations](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/communication-foundations-2/welcome?u=57684225&auth=true) (LinkedIn Learning 01:24 hrs)
* [Grammar Foundations](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/grammar-foundations/welcome?u=57684225&auth=true) (LinkedIn Learning 02:11 hrs)
* [Writing Email](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/writing-email/welcome?u=57684225&auth=true) (LinkedIn Learning 01:13 hrs).

## Communication processes

A duty of PCBUs is to provide their workers with a meaningful communication process, which will:

* enable them to share relevant information regarding the nature and conditions of their workplace
* give them the opportunity to speak about what affects their health, safety and welfare in that work environment.

Open and meaningful communication exists when workers and other people in the workplace are encouraged to:

* ask questions
* raise safety issues
* make recommendations about identified safety issues
* become part of the decision-making process.

## Types of communication

Some of the types of communication that can be used to discuss WHS in the workplace are:

* safety audits
* work group meetings, such as coffee cup and toolbox meetings
* individual interviews
* emails and memos
* posters around the workplace
* information posted on the organisation’s intranet
* reports
* newsletters
* safety training
* presentations either by WHS experts or other staff members.

Fair and equal access to information is the responsibility of the PCBU. Awareness of barriers to information, such as disability, language, literacy and culture, and a willingness to address these barriers is important so that everyone can participate effectively.

Topic 3: WHS issues

­

# 3.1 Overview

As a worker, you're entitled to have a say about WHS issues in your workplace via consultation, participation and communication.

In this topic you’ll learn about:

* WHS meetings
* raising WHS issues and supporting others
* following up outcomes
* communicating discussions and outcomes to others.

# 3.2 WHS meetings

Any WHS issues must be raised at appropriate workplace meetings, and actions to address issues need to be assigned to a specific staff member. That staff member will then be responsible for completing the action in the designated time. Also, decisions made and operational changes that are required need to be communicated to other relevant staff within the organisation.

WHS meetings should involve all stakeholders within the organisation and their representatives. To ensure that those meetings aren’t forgotten or neglected, they must be scheduled regularly, for example, monthly.

Today it’s possible to participate in a meeting face-to-face, or via teleconference, videoconference, or online collaboration software. However, the structure of meetings hasn’t changed that much over time, and regardless of the technology being used, you need to be prepared before the meeting starts.

## Work group meetings

Small work group meetings are designed to make workers’ participation easier and allow them to identify and raise safety issues that may happen in their workplace. These meetings are also known as toolbox meetings (generally outdoor trade staff would participate in toolbox meetings) and coffee cup meetings (for indoor or office staff).

These types of meetings:

* are designed to encourage workers’ participation
* present information in an easily understood format
* are brief, usually at the beginning of the day
* discuss issues relevant to the workers’ daily activities in the workplace
* raise awareness of issues that may affect workers' safety and health
* are well documented, including outcomes of the meetings
* are held regularly, often weekly
* are usually run by the supervisor, with input from the WHS representative.

### Objectives of work group meetings

The objectives of such meetings include:

* raising awareness of issues
* raising urgent issues and how they’ll be addressed
* providing feedback and communication between employer and employees
* providing progress reports of current issues being actioned
* providing opportunities for generating solutions to WHS issues
* building the work group decision-making process.

### The agenda

A meeting agenda is a list of items that need to be addressed at a meeting. These items could come from many sources throughout the organisation – the union, the management, a staff member, a WHS representative, etc. The WHS meeting agenda is a roadmap of how the meeting will proceed. It includes a list of WHS items to be presented and discussed.

 Resources

## Additional resources on meetings

Free forms and templates in relation to various WHS reporting issues, including minutes of work group meetings, are available from the [Everything OHS](https://www.workplace-safety.com.au/diy-templates.html) website.

Refer to this example of an [action plan](https://images.template.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/11105135/Occupational-Health-and-Safety-Action-Plan-PDF-Free-Download.pdf) (from Work Safe Victoria), which is similar to what needs to be captured in minutes.

 Practice activity

## Activity 3.1: WHS meeting agenda items

1. Looking at your current workstation/work environment, create a list of WHS issues that could become part of a future WHS meeting agenda. This page on [office workstations](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/injury-prevention-safety/hazardous-manual-tasks/office-workstations) may assist you.

# 3.3 Raising WHS issues and supporting others

If you have a specific issue that you want to raise at a meeting, it’s a good idea to ask it to be placed on the meeting agenda. However, there is usually an agenda item (general business) allocated for discussing additional relevant items.

It’s important that you share your knowledge of WHS with other staff in your workplace. You can support them in following the workplace processes, including raising WHS issues through the appropriate channels. If you’re involved in the WHS committee directly, you might find that your ability to support others in the workplace is even greater. You should look to provide support wherever possible or direct staff to those who can support them best.

Supporting your colleagues in WHS meetings will also involve using appropriate communication and interpersonal skills, such as active listening, open body language and committing to following up on issues (if that’s part of your responsibility).

 Practice activity

## Activity 3.2: Meeting procedures

1. Read through the [meeting procedures](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/books/inc-guide-incorporated-associations-western-australia/meeting-procedures) of the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety for an examples of formal meeting procedures. What happens if someone wants to raise an issue at a meeting that wasn’t on the agenda?

# 3.4 Recording discussions and outcomes

During the WHS meeting, each of the items on the agenda will be discussed. Some of those discussions will lead to a decision on behalf of the WHS committee. That decision may be, for example:

* to purchase new equipment e.g. fire extinguishers or a printer that uses safer components and consumables
* to appoint new or changed staff positions to implement or monitor WHS issues
* to change the way that the organisation operates:
  + Organisational practice e.g. delivery trucks may now have to arrive via a certain entrance as there have been near misses using the previous route; some staff may be affected
  + Organisational culture e.g. smoking breaks may be reduced or moved to a better location.

These decisions will usually lead to one or more of the committee members being assigned the **action** of ensuring that the decision is carried out within a certain timeframe.

* Those members’ names are recorded against the decision action and the date to be implemented in the minutes.
* The action may then become your responsibility or that of other individuals.
* When the next WHS meeting happens, the minutes from the previous meeting are read out, including all actions.

The expectation is that you will complete your actions by the set date.

## Records of work group meetings

Records (minutes) of work group meetings are generally simple, listing items such as:

* issues discussed at the meeting
* resolutions reached
* action required
* person responsible for completing the action
* solutions requiring implementation
* timeframe
* recommendations that have received management approval
* items still awaiting approval
* comments
* signature and position of workgroup leader
* name of workgroup area.

 Collaboration

## Activity 3.3: Supporting staff members

Think about how you might support staff members with raising WHS issues that they may discuss with you. In doing this, you could do some research on procedures for reporting WHS matters in a variety of businesses. Discuss your results with the class.

# 3.5 Following up outcomes

Depending on your role within the business, you may be called on to monitor actions associated with WHS. How this is achieved will vary from place to place, and for large organisations, you may be responsible for only a subset of this task.

Consider two scenarios that might apply:

## Scenario 1

Bill works for a large multinational company and is a member of the WHS committee for his site. His role includes being responsible for monitoring incident-related remedial actions and following up those actions to ensure that they’re closed out appropriately. Bill is usually a site supervisor, but each Monday morning he takes the time to go into the Incident Management System and run the Outstanding Actions Report.

In this system, there are usually around 15 active incidents with 10-20 outstanding actions. This report shows Bill:

* what actions are pending completion, but not yet due
* what actions are due today
* what actions are overdue
* which open incidents don’t yet have any actions assigned to them.

For each action that’s due today, the system will automatically send an email to the person responsible reminding them to complete the action. Bill looks over the list to check for any known issues, e.g. Larry is away this week and he has an action due today. Bill might reassign actions if necessary.

For each overdue action, Bill will directly contact the person responsible and discuss what’s going on. Sometimes Bill will grant an extension or he might provide assistance or arrange for other support or resources to get the action completed.

Bill also checks on actions completed a month ago, where the incident was categorised as significant or moderate, to ensure that the action had the desired effect, e.g. did the new slip-proof paint on the steps reduce slips and could staff confirm the steps were now safer?

Lastly, Bill will check the date and risk rating of open incidents without actions. If Bill sees that the incident is over 24 hours old and serious, he’ll contact the allocated staff member for the incident to find out what’s happening. For moderate incidents, he’ll wait a week before following up this matter.

## Scenario 2

Jenny works for a small business. There are four staff members working from a serviced office building. All the staff members review and edit textbooks for a publishing firm. Jenny is the supervisor and has accepted responsibility for WHS in the workplace. At the weekly team meetings, WHS is on the agenda, however there are rarely any WHS issues to discuss.

Last week Tim raised concerns about the worn carpet in the hall. Jenny logged a call that day with the building manager to get the carpet addressed before someone trips. Before the team meeting today, Jenny has checked the meeting agenda, recalled the action to get the carpet addressed and called the building manager to discuss this matter. He advised that they can either replace in two months or place a hall runner this week. Jenny plans to discuss this with the team today and decide if the carpet will be safe enough for two months. This is her preference as she feels that if a temporary measure is put in, then it isn’t likely that the new carpet will be completed in a timely manner. If the team doesn’t believe this is safe, Jenny will ask that the hall runner is put in place, as she knows the safety of the team is the most important thing.

From these scenarios, you can see how different the roles of individuals might be in respect of following up outcomes from WHS meetings and discussions. What’s important is that both people take WHS seriously; they’re conscious that the actions of the team might affect the wellbeing of others in the workplace.

Taking steps to ensure that planned actions are completed and any other agreed outcomes from meetings/discussions are followed through is a vital part of the process. There’s no point in agreeing to action if nobody ensures that the person responsible will complete the action appropriately and promptly.

# 3.6 Communicating discussions and outcomes to others

Any decisions, outcomes, and changes should be distributed promptly in a manner that will allow access to every stakeholder in the workplace. The form of communication isn’t important; what is important is that everyone has access.

That communication may be undertaken in-person or electronically:

* Emails – instant mass-rollout
* Memo – more formal announcement
* Newsletters – regular information dissemination
* Presentations – to raise awareness and explain decisions and the implications
* Group and individual meetings – to allow two-way communications
* Using interpreters and translators – ensuring that all staff can understand the message
* Reports – covering the topic in a great deal of detail and includes
  + Hazard Reports
  + Incident Reports
  + Investigation Reports.
* Minutes of meetings from incident investigations
* First aid records – provide valuable historical data
* Workshops and training for the staff
* Websites, journals, and the intranet – for on-going reference to the new policies, procedures, forms, etc.

Remember – monitoring and improving WHS is an iterative process. It is never really a process that will be completed.

 Practice activity

## Activity 3.4: Forms of communication

1. A recent decision of the WHS Committee, of which you are a member, will have personal implications for staff. For example, you have an action to ensure safety by defining the type of clothes that staff should wear to work. Which forms of communication would be suitable to use? Why?

# Summary

You have now completed the resources for BSBWHS304 Participate effectively in WHS communication and consultation processes. In this workbook you learned how to:

* contribute to establishing and running WHS consultation and participation processes
* raise WHS issues with others
* contribute to obtaining and communicating information about WHS issues.

# Image attributions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Image | Page # | Attribution |
| Cover | 1 | © Shutterstock under licence to TAFE NSW |
| Topic 1 cover | 7 | © Shutterstock under licence to TAFE NSW |
| Topic 2 cover | 19 | © Shutterstock under licence to TAFE NSW |
| Topic 3 cover | 33 | © Shutterstock under licence to TAFE NSW |