

# Contents

<b>Before you begin</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Topic 1 Establish work health and safety practices</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1A</b> Access and interpret WHS legislation, regulations, code of conduct and workplace policies and procedures	<b>2</b>
<b>1B</b> Develop procedures for hazard identification, assessment and risk control	<b>12</b>
<b>1C</b> Monitor risk controls and hazard-specific procedures to support legislative and regulatory compliance	<b>20</b>
<b>1D</b> Identify requirements for expert WHS advice, and request as required	<b>23</b>
Summary	<b>25</b>
Learning checkpoint 1: Establish work health and safety practices	<b>26</b>
<b>Topic 2 Facilitate consultation, cooperation and communication</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2A</b> Develop and provide activities to provide WHS advice	<b>34</b>
<b>2B</b> Monitor processes for ensuring that workers can contribute feedback on WHS issues	<b>37</b>
<b>2C</b> Document outcomes of consultation and communicate to workers	<b>41</b>
<b>2D</b> Develop and implement processes to ensure documentation of responsibilities, duties and accountabilities	<b>45</b>
<b>2E</b> Implement and monitor training programs to ensure WHS training requirements are addressed	<b>47</b>
Summary	<b>52</b>
Learning checkpoint 2 : Facilitate consultation, cooperation and communication	<b>53</b>
<b>Topic 3 Monitor compliance with risk control processes</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3A</b> Develop WHS record-keeping policies and procedures and provide information to workers	<b>60</b>
<b>3B</b> Monitor hazard, incident and injury reporting processes to meet legislative requirements	<b>64</b>
<b>3C</b> Evaluate WHS record-keeping policies and procedures for compliance with legislative requirements	<b>68</b>
Summary	<b>72</b>
Learning checkpoint 3: Monitor compliance with risk control processes	<b>73</b>

# 1A Access and interpret WHS legislation, regulations, code of conduct and workplace policies and procedures

Work health and safety (WHS) legislation is one of the most important pieces of legislation dealing with the work environment in Australia. It addresses the fundamental right all workers have to a safe and healthy work environment.

One of the most significant changes has been the national workplace health and safety reforms that resulted in development of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) and model regulations and codes of practice. These reforms are designed to improve national workplace health and safety by simplifying the system and making laws more consistent across Australia.



Each state and territory has a regulatory body responsible for enabling and enforcing compliance with the WHS regulation. You should regularly visit your regulator's website to locate to the most up-to-date version of the Act, Regulation, Code of Practice and Industry Guideline.

## WHS legislation

On 1 January 2012, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) came into effect, replacing the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (Cth). The WHS legislation is made up of the model WHS Act, Regulations, Codes of Practice and a national compliance and enforcement policy. This model legislation was developed by the Commonwealth government to harmonise work health and safety laws across Australia. For the Act to be legally binding, it must be passed by the Parliament in each state and territory. At this time, not all Australian states and territories have implemented harmonised WHS laws based on this new Act.

### **The purpose of harmonising the work health and safety laws is to:**

- ▶ protect the health and safety of workers
- ▶ improve safety outcomes in the workplaces
- ▶ reduce compliance costs for business
- ▶ improve efficiency for regulatory agencies.

Here are examples of model codes of practice developed by Safe Work Australia.

### Example model codes of practice

- ▶ Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination
- ▶ First Aid in the Workplace
- ▶ Hazardous Manual Tasks

## General duty requirements

General duty requirements apply to everyone working in community services. General duty refers to duties that the WHS Act places upon people to ensure their own safety at work, the safety of others at the workplace and the safety of anyone else who might be injured as a result of that work. These duties are assigned to those who are in a position to control the origin of the risk and must be carried out with due diligence, otherwise known as reasonable care.

The aim of these general duties is to prevent any death, injury or illness that may result from activities at that workplace.

General duties can be shared but never transferred, such as the duty requirement for raising WHS issues. Your community workplace should have a process for raising issues such as identified hazards, incidents and injuries to management. It is the duty of all workers to report these issues either directly to management or through a health and safety representative (HSR) where appropriate. The reporting line usually follows the governance line of the workplace and an issue will be raised up through the line management; for example, through the worker, HSR, the manager and the PCBU.

Here are some general duties that you can do to keep the workplace safe.

### General duties

- ▶ Understand and comply with relevant work health and safety laws.
- ▶ Take reasonable care to protect your own health and safety and that of the people around you.
- ▶ Use the safety equipment provided by your employer.
- ▶ Follow workplace policies, procedures and any safety instructions.
- ▶ Participate in risk management processes and report workplace hazards and incidents.
- ▶ Communicate and consult with people regarding risk management.

## Code of conduct

A code of conduct is a set of principles, standards, values or rules of behaviour that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of work for a workplace. The code of conduct should promote the welfare of people by protecting their rights and ensuring ethical practices are followed.

The code of conduct may vary between community services workplaces; however, most community services have a code of conduct that promotes ethical behaviour, accountability, transparent sharing of information, bestowing dignity and respect and practising confidentiality.

## Rights and responsibilities of PCBU's

The WHS Act states that a PCBU must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health and safety of workers engaged, or caused to be engaged, by the PCBU; workers whose activities are influenced or directed by the PCBU; and other persons who could be put at risk from work carried out by or for the PCBU.

The PCBU has overarching obligations regarding consultation, issue resolution, incident notification and compliance with regulations.

Responsibilities of the PCBU include, but are not limited to, the provision of:

- ▶ a safe work environment and safe systems of work
- ▶ workplace monitoring
- ▶ safe plant and structures
- ▶ safe use, handling and storage of plant, structures and substances
- ▶ provision of facilities for the workers' welfare
- ▶ information, training, instruction and supervision.

## Duty of care

Duty of care describes the legal obligation that individuals and organisations have to anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment, or as a result of their actions. A person or organisation must do everything they can to remove or minimise the possible cause of harm.

While aspects of WHS legislation may vary between states and territories, there are common legislative requirements and obligations under the duty-of-care principle. Everyone in the community services environment has the responsibility of duty of care for themselves, the people they care for, visitors and each other.



## Due diligence

Due diligence in its simplest form means to take care. This means that when you are working in the community that you take every reasonable precaution, in any given circumstance, to protect the health, safety and welfare of yourself and the people you work with.

Due diligence requires that all workers understand and carry out their legal duties, assess the risk and hazards in the workplace on an ongoing basis, and take all reasonable precautions with respect to those risks.

Circumstances in the community are always changing. Therefore, to ensure you practise due diligence, you need to constantly evaluate the circumstances surrounding you and ensure you are taking reasonable precautions to minimise all possible risks.

## Workplace policies and procedures

The type and number of policies, procedures and processes will vary depending on the nature of the work and the hazards in the specific community services environment in which you are working.

A WHS policy is a written statement of how your workplace is committed to achieving a safe and healthy workplace. These policies should be developed in consultation with workers and clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of management and workers to achieve compliance with WHS legislation.

The community services procedures are documents that give specific instructions on how the requirements of the WHS policies are to be met. Below are some examples of procedures that may be used in the community services environment.

### Workplace policies and procedures

- ▶ Hazard management
- ▶ Manual handling of people and objects
- ▶ Hazardous waste
- ▶ Infection control
- ▶ Incident reporting and investigation

### Example

#### Access and interpret WHS legislation, regulations, code of conduct and workplace policies and procedures

Shawn has recently moved interstate and started a new job. On his first day at the new workplace Shawn identifies a hazard and tells his colleague John about it. John tells Shawn that he needs to report it, but Shawn isn't sure whether this is part of his duty of care.

Shawn searches the internet and finds the WHS Act and Regulations relevant to his new State. He then locates the section of the Act and Regulations relevant to duty holders that are workers. The information confirms that Shawn has a duty of care to report this hazard to his manager.

Shawn knows that every workplace has a different system for managing work health and safety so he refers to the WHS policy, procedures and code of conduct of his new workplace. As he reads through the documents he discovers that there is an elected health and safety representative (HSR) who can help him raise this issue with management.

Shawn consults with the HSR, Robert, about the issue and Robert explains that he will raise it with the PCBU, Susan. Susan will be responsible for following it up with Shawn, the HSR and other workers until the issue is resolved.



<p><b>Level 1 control</b></p>	<p><b>Elimination</b></p> <p>Eliminating the risk at its source should always be the first choice. The source of the risk is the hazard, so this usually means removing hazardous material or abandoning hazardous work practices.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Clean up a spill straight away to avoid anyone else slipping and falling over and hurting themselves.</li> <li>▶ Stop using toxic substances that are not essential to the work.</li> <li>▶ Repair or replace equipment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2 controls</b></p>	<p><b>Substitution</b></p> <p>If elimination is not practicable, substitute the hazard with something of a lesser risk. This is also likely to be a less expensive measure to implement.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use less-hazardous chemical materials.</li> <li>▶ Reduce the size of objects that need to be lifted.</li> <li>▶ Break a task down into smaller chunks so there is not as much risk; for example, share a task with another person.</li> </ul> <p><b>Isolation</b></p> <p>This involves physically separating the source of harm from people by distance or by using barriers.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Install guard rails around exposed edges and holes in floors.</li> <li>▶ Use remote control systems to operate machinery.</li> <li>▶ Store chemicals in a fume cabinet.</li> </ul> <p><b>Engineering controls</b></p> <p>The next best possible solution is to implement engineering controls that involve changing equipment or tools.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide a trolley to move heavy loads.</li> <li>▶ Use a hoist rather than trying to lift a consumer from the floor.</li> <li>▶ Install ventilation to remove chemical fumes.</li> <li>▶ Change the layout of work levels to minimise bending and twisting during manual handling.</li> </ul>

Risk analysis takes place to some extent at all stages of the hazard and risk management process. Because the community services environment often has multiple hazards that need to be addressed, risk analysis can be a useful tool to prioritise the order in which the hazards are managed. Tools such as a risk assessment matrix can be used to simplify the risk analysis process.

## Risk assessment matrix

A risk assessment matrix is a tool that allows you to evaluate the likelihood of an injury or illness occurring due to a hazard, and the likely severity of that potential injury or illness.

The higher the rating of likelihood and/or severity of injury or illness, the higher the need to control the risk associated with that hazard.

A risk assessment matrix will often be used to assess a hazard before and after the implementation of controls to ensure that the risk has been reduced to an acceptable level.

LIKELIHOOD	VERY LIKELY	Acceptable risk Medium	Unacceptable risk High	Unacceptable risk Extreme
	LIKELY	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Medium	Unacceptable risk High
	UNLIKELY	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Medium
		MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR
IMPACT				

## Develop procedures for assessment and control of risks

Assessing and controlling risk requires a consistent team approach involving all of the people affected by the risk. Often people working in the area where the risk is present will have valuable insight and knowledge that will contribute to a more thorough assessment and implementation of optimal control measures.

Having a procedure for assessing and controlling risk enables people to carry out the risk management process to the same high standard every time.

Your risk workplace assessment and control procedure should clearly outline:

- ▶ the methods for assessing risk
- ▶ risk classifications and priorities
- ▶ implementation of the hierarchy of control
- ▶ individual roles and responsibilities
- ▶ required communication, consultation, documentation and reporting
- ▶ recommendations concerning how and when to review the outcomes of the risk management process.



## Summary

1. Work health and safety (WHS) is concerned with the health and safety of all people in the workplace. The main objective of WHS is to prevent injury or harm in the workplace.
2. The WHS legislation is made up of the model WHS Act, Regulations, Codes of Practice and a national compliance and enforcement policy. Each state and territory has a regulator to enforce legislation in their area.
3. Regularly accessing WHS information is essential to keeping policies, procedures and work practices in compliance with the legislation requirements. State or territory regulators provide valuable resources that can help you to comply with WHS laws.
4. Duty of care describes the legal obligation that individuals and organisations have to anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment or as a result of their actions. A person or organisation must do everything they can to remove or minimise the possible cause of harm.
5. Everyone in the community services environment, including visitors, workers, officers and PCBUs, have duties under WHS legislation. The PCBU and their officers have a higher level of responsibility that covers all aspects of the workplace. All workers have a duty to raise issues related to hazards, incident and injuries.
6. Your WHS policy is a written statement of how your workplace is committed to achieving a safe and healthy workplace. These policies should be developed in consultation with workers, should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of management and workers and should be monitored regularly to ensure compliance with WHS legislation.
7. Hazard identification, risk assessment and risk management are performed by all duty holders and are essential to keeping the workplace safe. At each stage of the process, a high level of risk analysis, consultation and documentation is required.
8. The PCBU has a responsibility, where reasonably practicable, to either employ or engage a suitably qualified person to provide expert WHS advice to the HSC, HSR and workers as required.



## 2A Develop and provide activities to provide WHS advice

One of the aims of the WHS Act is to foster a work environment where cooperative and consultative relationships can exist between PCBUs and workers regarding work health and safety matters. Such relationships enable the flow of essential information across all areas of a workplace.

The development and provision of procedures, processes and activities to deliver and receive WHS information is required under WHS legislation. When developing activities to provide WHS advice, it is essential that the activity will allow both the sharing of information and an avenue for participation and providing feedback.

Setting up the correct consultation framework in your workplace ensures that information distribution is systematic and is not person-dependent. This method acknowledges the limitations of people in reliably remembering and communicating vital information. By having systems in place, such as meeting minutes and reporting lines, high quality, timely and consistent information is distributed every time.

By law, the PCBU must consult workers before making decisions about:

- ▶ identifying hazards, assessing risks and implementing controls
- ▶ changes to work practices and systems
- ▶ designing, implementing, reviewing and updating policies.

### Consultative activities

Consultation is the term used to describe the process of providing information, seeking a viewpoint, considering ideas and solutions and providing feedback.

Consultative activities are an essential requirement to ensure compliance with WHS legislation and the Work Health and Safety Consultation, Co-operation and Co-ordination Code of Practice.

By providing WHS consultative activities, the PCBU can communicate information regarding identifying hazards, assessing risk and use of controls, and effectively managing workplace health and safety issues. Workers have valuable first-hand information and experience of the various things that may give rise to hazards in the workplace. It is therefore important to provide WHS activities that allow workers to be consulted regarding these WHS issues.

Consultation about WHS issues may take place through:

- ▶ WHS personnel, such as an HSR or health and safety officers
- ▶ the health and safety committee
- ▶ feedback during workplace inspections and risk assessments
- ▶ regular team meetings and individual face-to-face meetings
- ▶ WHS training sessions
- ▶ notices and information sheets posted in frequented sites around the workplace
- ▶ individual and group emails
- ▶ public addresses and the media.

## Workplace communication

Workplace communication is the exchange of verbal and nonverbal information from one person to another. Effective communication is an important aspect of work health and safety.

Effective communication increases the efficiency and productivity of a workplace and is also an important aspect of minimising and resolving disputes.

Some important factors that influence workplace communication are outlined below.

### Method

- ▶ Information should be simple and clear and may be delivered by written information, visual demonstrations and audible instructions.

### Content

- ▶ The amount of information provided should be relevant, engaging and able to be understood by the audience.

### Frequency

- ▶ Depending on the nature of the content, the information may need to be delivered only once or many times over to achieve the desired result.

### Skills

- ▶ Getting a message across is depends on the skills of the people giving and receiving the information. It is therefore important to consider literacy levels and learning styles when communicating.

### Example

#### Document outcomes of consultation and communicate to workers

Eleanor is responsible for coordinating the trial of a new piece of equipment in her workplace and has been asked by her manager Adam to document the consultation process and outcomes.

Eleanor arranges for an equipment demonstration and information session and invites all of the people that may be affected by the change.

Eleanor keeps a record of everyone who attended the training and, at the end of the equipment demonstration, Eleanor hands out feedback forms and requests that the forms be returned via the comment box in the staff room within a fortnight. At the end of the fortnight Eleanor also emails everyone involved an electronic survey asking for specific information around the storage, access, ease of use and whether the equipment meets the need of the workers.

Eleanor records the relevant issues regarding the equipment, who was involved, what decisions were made, a summary of the feedback and the outcome of the trial. A copy of this document is then used to notify the workers that the equipment passed inspection and that Adam will be responsible for ordering the new equipment within a month.



## Example

**Develop and implement processes to ensure documentation of responsibilities, duties and accountabilities**

Sherrie works in a small team of people who are developing a procedure for equipment storage in their workplace. Unfortunately at the last team meeting two team members had completed work on the same thing without talking to the rest of the group. Not only had time been wasted by duplicating work, but the work produced did not take into account important safety considerations.



The team decided that the best way to overcome this issue was to draw up a project plan that documented the roles and responsibilities of each member, and to arrange a weekly progress meeting.

Sherrie divided up the roles based on the expertise in the group and designed a meeting agenda and action list, naming the responsible person for completing key actions and the time frame they must do it in.

The team members also agreed that relevant hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control considerations should be discussed at every meeting.

By developing and implementing these processes, Sherrie's team effectively used principles of safe design when designing and writing their equipment storage procedure.



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## Practice task 8

1. What is safe design and when should it be used in the community services environment?

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2. What are the principles of safe design processes that should be considered when developing and implementing workplace processes?

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**Click to complete Practice task 8**

# 3A Develop WHS record-keeping policies and procedures and provide information to workers

Your community services environment will have record-keeping policies and procedures to comply with WHS legislation. By law, some WHS matters have mandatory record-keeping requirements and include specific instruction about the nature of the information that is recorded, how the information is stored and how long the records must be kept for.

It is important to develop WHS record-keeping policies and procedures to provide important information to workers regarding the documentation and reporting requirements of their role.

It is important to be aware of the regulatory record-keeping requirements for:

- ▶ workplace hazards, incidents and injuries
- ▶ notifiable incidents
- ▶ high risk activities such as working with asbestos, hazardous chemicals, lead, plant and confined spaces.

## Develop record-keeping policies and procedures

The record-keeping policies and procedures in your workplace may include a stand-alone document and instructional material that applies to a specific WHS issue and is therefore addressed within the policy or procedure outlining management of that WHS issue. For example, your workplace may have a policy regarding general record-keeping principles, archiving and storage of documents, and specific record-keeping instructions within the hazard identification procedure regarding the record keeping requirements, such as use of a specific form, that apply only to hazard identification.

When developing record-keeping policies and procedures, it is important to consider the record-keeping principles shown below.

### General record-keeping principles

- ▶ Accountability – Ensure policies and procedures clearly delegate record-keeping responsibilities.
- ▶ Integrity – Use technology and processes that will ensure authentic and accurate information.
- ▶ Protection – Ensure that, where necessary, records adhere to privacy and confidentiality laws.
- ▶ Compliance – Ensure record-keeping processes meet legislative and regulatory requirements.
- ▶ Availability – Maintain records so that the information can be easily and accurately retrieved.
- ▶ Retention – Maintain records for the specified time frame.

## Notifiable incidents

Notifiable incidents under the national work health and safety (WHS) laws are specific incidents that must be reported to the regulator.

The person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has a duty to inform the regulator immediately after they become aware of a notifiable incident occurring in, or as a result of, the business they are conducting. The PCBU can notify the regulator by telephone or in writing, in the form approved by the regulator.

If the regulator is notified by telephone they may also request a written account of the proceedings related to the notifiable incident.

Notifiable incidents include:

- ▶ the death of a person
- ▶ a serious injury or illness, such as a serious burn requiring immediate medical treatment
- ▶ a dangerous incident, such as the collapse of a structure.

### Example

#### Develop WHS record-keeping policies and procedures and provide information to workers

Brad is the manager of Cosgrove aged care facility and recently engaged Greg, an external WHS consultant, to audit the record-keeping policies and procedures in his workplace.

Greg reported that Cosgrove's record-keeping policies and procedures contained high-quality information regarding protection of privacy and compliance with legislation. However, Greg also identified that key information on accountable persons and the integrity of the information was lacking.



Brad circulated Greg's report to Cosgrove's health and safety committee (HSC) and requested that, firstly, the HSC develop an overarching record-keeping policy that documented how Cosgrove would ensure accountability, integrity, protection, compliance, availability, retention, disposition and transparency in all record-keeping processes. Brad requested that, secondly, the committee update all WHS policies and procedures, such as the notifiable incident procedure, to include documented roles and accountability. Lastly, Brad requested that the HSC review Cosgrove's record-keeping technology and processes, such as incident reporting forms, to ensure they are current and record accurate information.

The HSC worked in consultation with Cosgrove's workers to update all of the record-keeping policies and procedures as requested. By the end of their efforts Brad was satisfied that the updated policies and procedures were a valuable source of WHS information to all of the workers at the Cosgrove aged care facility.

## Your role in helping to monitor compliance

Your workplace should have a formal system in place that enables WHS compliance to be monitored on a regular basis. This may include conducting biannual safety audits; observing specific safety measures through walk-through inspections; conducting WHS meetings to clarify procedures; checking the quality and currency of WHS information; and checking incident reports.

Work health and safety in the workplace should be everyone's priority and it is everyone's responsibility to participate in activities that monitor processes to ensure the workplace is safe.

Here are some ways that you can monitor your workplace's compliance with WHS legislation.

### Monitoring workplace WHS compliance

- ▶ Check the service's safety system by doing walk-through inspections and a safety audit.
- ▶ Research and collect data to show evidence of compliance; for example, check audits, accident forms or feedback forms.
- ▶ Identify hazards, assess risks and make recommendations for controlling the hazards and risks.
- ▶ Report breaches of WHS procedures.
- ▶ Make sure actions arising from the health and safety committee meetings are carried out and reviewed to check they are effective.
- ▶ Confirm that accidents, incidents and near misses are being reported and dealt with appropriately.
- ▶ Stay up-to-date with WHS trends and developments by reading legislation, standards, manufacturers' manuals and specifications.
- ▶ Check that records of consultation and risk management activities are being correctly maintained.

## Use reporting processes in prevention strategies

The information contained in hazard, injury and incident reports should be used to identify potential causes of harm in the workplace and devise appropriate prevention strategies.

Each incident and injury report should be dealt with individually and as part of the bigger picture by analysing incident and injury trends in the workplace.

When devising injury and incident prevention strategies it is important to identify all of the factors involved and then analyse them in the context of the relationship between the factors, the work task and the work environment.



# 3C Evaluate WHS record-keeping policies and procedures for compliance with legislative requirements

Evaluation is a systematic approach to assessing the quality of a service and how well it achieves its proposed outcomes. It is important to evaluate the safety management systems of a workplace to ensure that the systems are achieving compliance with the WHS legislations through the provision of a safe workplace.

When evaluating a system it is important that there is quality at each level of the system, including the policies, procedures, work instructions or practice and also the workplace records that provide evidence of the delivered outcomes of the system.



The quality of the evidence provided by the records will depend on the quality of the record-keeping policy and procedures. If record-keeping practices are inconsistent and inaccurate then the data extracted from them will not accurately reflect the quality of the system, and therefore be of little to no value in measuring the outcomes of the system.

## Evaluate incident report data

Analysing data collected from incident, accident and near-miss reports can indicate whether WHS legislation is being complied with. A reduction in the number of serious occurrences may demonstrate that procedures and management systems are effective. Trends indicated in the reports, such as the possibility that people are disregarding the need to wear PPE, can lead WHS specialists to identify where stricter procedures may need to be developed.



When analysing incident report data is important to consider the quality of the data that is being analysed. By evaluating the quality of the incident report data you can ensure that the data accurately reflects the hazards and risk inherent to the work tasks and environment.



## Example

**Evaluate WHS record-keeping policies and procedures for compliance with legislative requirements**

Rhys is the manager of the Lilydale Community Health Centre (LCHC) and plays an active role in reviewing the workplace incident and injury report data. When analysing the workplace data from the past five years, Rhys notices that the number and nature of incidents is very inconsistent.

Rhys is concerned that, despite the fact that a new high-quality safety management system was implemented two years ago, there is no reportable trend to show a reduction in workplace incidents and injuries.

Rhys requests that Janelle, a quality management system expert, evaluates the WHS record-keeping data to determine whether or not it accurately reflects the safety management system the LCHC has put in place.

Janelle explains to Rhys that she cannot evaluate the report data in isolation as the policies, procedures, work practices and recording methods all contribute to the quality of the report data.

Janelle evaluates each component individually and identifies that the record-keeping work practices lack detailed instructions that would ensure consistency, which has created inconsistencies in the frequency and content of the data recorded.

Rhys updates the practice documents to include more detailed instructions and notices, over the course of the next 18 months, that the data is much more consistent. With this accurate data, Rhys identifies workplace trends and applies this information to incident prevention strategies at the LCHC.



## Practice task 12

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Amelia is the director of Clean-Bee, a community service that provides domestic assistance to eligible people who require assistance with making beds, cleaning and vacuuming.

Six months ago the team at Clean-Bee purchased and implemented a new electronic incident management system that allows incident and injury reports to be submitted online. Once a report is submitted, a notification email is sent to Amelia so that she can investigate the incident and respond appropriately.

Amelia expected there to be an increase of incident reports with the introduction of the new system, but she has noticed a significant decline instead.

Amelia has requested that Joanne, the health and safety representative, evaluates the incident reporting system and finds out why the old and new incident data is so different.



## Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 4A Determine WHS priorities in consultation with the work group**
- 4B Develop a WHS action plan taking account of priorities and training needs**
- 4C Identify potential barriers to improvement**
- 4D Establish processes to monitor achievement against the plan and update plan as required**

## Evaluate and maintain WHS

Your community services environment should have a systematic and continuous improvement approach towards work health and safety (WHS) matters. Each workplace should establish work WHS priorities in consultation with the workers and develop and implement a WHS action plan that addresses the WHS priorities and training needs of that workplace.

Like any quality improvement process, implementing the WHS improvements in the WHS action plan will require addressing barriers to improvement in the workplace.

Your WHS action plan should be a changeable document that can be updated as the plan is monitored and corrective actions are required.

Common WHS priorities include developing, implementing and monitoring:

- ▶ WHS policies, procedures and practices
- ▶ a consultation framework to meet WHS consultation and participation requirements
- ▶ a workplace induction and training program
- ▶ hazard, incident and injury record-keeping and reporting policies, procedures and practices
- ▶ hazard identification, assessment and control policies, procedures and practices
- ▶ risk management plan for identified industry specific high risk hazards e.g. manual handling
- ▶ contractor management
- ▶ emergency response plan, policies, procedures, practices, training and drills.

## Determine WHS priorities by consulting with the work group

Involving workers in the process of establishing WHS priorities complies with the legislative requirement of a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to consult with workers before making decisions regarding identifying hazards; assessing risks; implementing controls, changes to work practices and systems; and designing, implementing, reviewing and updating policies.

Workers have first-hand knowledge and experience of the operational nature of their work tasks. This experience and knowledge means workers have valuable insight into common workplace hazards, the likely frequency of an incident occurring and potential control measures to effectively manage risk, while not interfering with the completion of the work task.

It is often best to establish WHS priorities, with the workers, in the context of a WHS action plan, as the consultation process will uncover valuable information about contributing environmental, people-related and task-specific factors that will aid future planning.

Here are some more benefits of consulting with workers.

### Benefits of consulting workers in the process of establishing WHS priorities

- ▶ Comply with WHS legislative consultation requirements.
- ▶ Raise awareness of WHS issues in the workplace.
- ▶ Raise awareness of the incident and injury management processes.
- ▶ Promote a culture of proactive health and safety behaviours.
- ▶ Identify key workplace hazards based on task-specific knowledge and experience.
- ▶ Identify solutions that will increase the efficiency of the work processes.

## Example

**Identify potential barriers to improvement**

Lana is the supervisor of the community equipment scheme, a warehouse responsible for the distribution, collection and maintenance of loan medical equipment such as raised chairs and shower stools.

Ralph, a worker at the warehouse, approached Lana last week with a great idea for improving workflow and decreasing manual-handling risk. Ralph suggested that they relocate all the heavier items to the large storage area located closer to the equipment pick-up entrance.

Lana talks to some of the key people that would be affected by the change and realises that there are some barriers to the improvement that will need to be addressed and overcome.

In her discussions with the workers, Lana identifies that the two main barriers to change are the lack of awareness for the need to change and concern for the way implementing the change will interrupt the service.

Lana arranges a focus group discussion at the next staff meeting and, through a range of directed questions, allows the team to discuss the current manual-handling risk and inconvenience of collecting the large equipment from the back of the warehouse. The team members quickly engage with the need to address the risk to themselves and other workers.

Everyone agrees that the equipment needs to be relocated and they are happy to assist once Lana suggests closing the service for a morning and rostering extra staff to help rearrange the warehouse.

By identifying and addressing the barriers to change, Lana successfully implemented and sustained an improvement in her workplace.



## Practice task 15

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Kaveh works as the practice manager of Sunshine General Medical Practice. Kaveh has noticed that, in the past six months, the reception workers at the practice have reported a significant increase in calls relating to clarifying appointment times and rescheduling missed appointments.

Kaveh discusses the issue with Zoey and Alfred, the owners of the practice, who suggest that the practice switches to a new client management system that can generate client appointment letters and send automated appointment reminder text messages to mobile phones.

Zoey and Alfred put Kaveh in charge of consulting with the reception staff and implementing the new system.

<b>WHS policy awareness</b>	Performance measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of policies developed and approved</li> <li>▶ Number of workers signed off on reading policy</li> </ul>
<b>Electrical safety</b>	Performance measure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of pieces of equipment tagged and tested within time frame</li> </ul>
<b>Fire safety</b>	Performance measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of drills completed successfully</li> <li>▶ Number of workers involved in training drill</li> </ul>
<b>Risk management</b>	Performance measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of hazard assessments completed</li> <li>▶ Number of controls implemented</li> </ul>

## Update WHS action plans

The development of the WHS plan should be an iterative process. An iterative process is a continuous improvement process of repetitive cycles of analysis and updates. At each new review cycle, analysis of performance measure data will indicate whether or not the plan is successfully achieving the workplace objectives, and indicate the need for corrective action.

As the community services environment is constantly changing, it is important that the WHS action plan is able to be updated as change in legislation, practice or need requires. The WHS action plan should be reviewed and updated at scheduled intervals after analysis of performance measure data, following an investigation into a workplace incident or as change in legislation requires.

The review process should identify the breakdown of WHS processes and barriers to achieving planned progress. The review should generate recommendations for system improvements and then those corrective actions should be implemented into the WHS action plan.

