



Australian Government
Comcare



REDUCING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS OF WORKPLACE CHANGE

Self-assessment tool for work health and safety risk management during organisational change

BACKGROUND

Persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs)—usually the employer—have a duty under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) to ensure the health and safety of their workers.

During times of change it is important to ensure work health and safety systems are considered and integrated into the change process to monitor and prevent risks to workers. When change is supported through consultation and effective communication, it is received more positively by workers and can improve health and productivity. In contrast, when change is not well managed, it can lead to psychological injuries, poor health outcomes and a decrease in productivity.

During change, organisations should focus on:

- > Consultation
- > Prevention
- > Early intervention
- > Recovery at and return to work
- > Leadership
- > Communication

WHAT IS THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR?

This tool is a guided self-assessment to identify key risks and corrective actions to minimise the risks of change.

This can be achieved through consulting with workers and systematically addressing the physical and psychosocial risks associated with change that may lead to injury prior to, and after, workers have commenced work in the changed circumstances or environment.

An example of organisational change that could affect your team are Machinery of Government changes.

- > For more information about the risks of workplace change, see *People Matters with Machinery of Government Changes Factsheet Working Together: promoting mental health and wellbeing at work*, available on the Comcare website at: <https://www.comcare.gov.au/safe-healthy-work/prevent-harm/psychosocial-hazards>

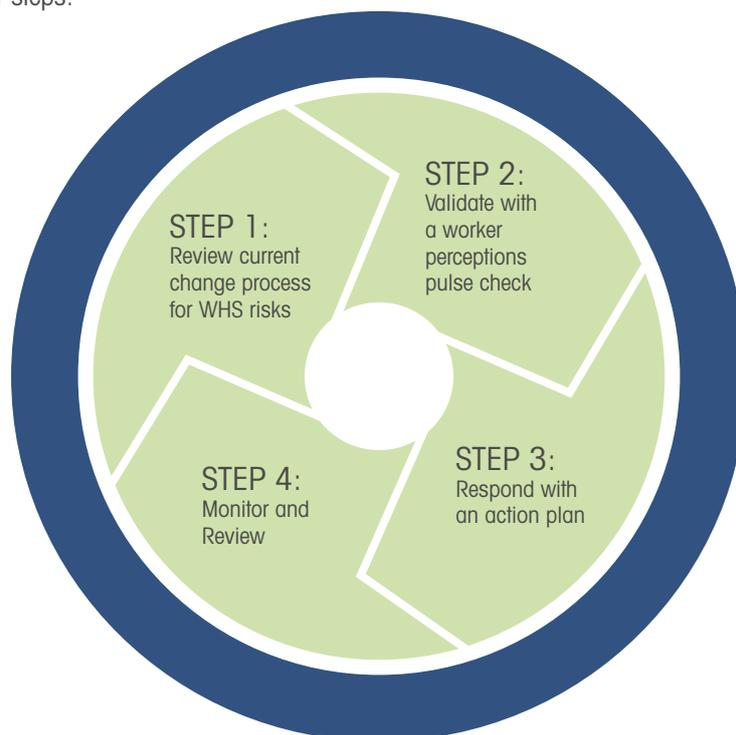
WHO IS THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR?

This can be used by anyone with responsibility as part of a change program. This includes change managers, work health and safety managers, human resources managers, project managers or people with leadership responsibilities.

HOW TO USE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Read these instructions in conjunction with attachment A: The Self-Assessment Tool, and attachment B: Worker Perceptions Pulse Check. The self-assessment tool has been designed to assess what systems and processes currently exist in workplaces, enhance those systems if needed, and to ensure the health and safety of workers impacted by the change.

The tool is divided into four steps:



Adapted from 'How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks', Work Health and Safety Codes of Practice 2011

STEP 1: REVIEW CURRENT CHANGE PROCESS FOR WHS RISKS

The self-assessment tool is divided into categories:

- > Communication, consultation and participation
 - *Principle: Consultation for change is comprehensive, ongoing and involves workers in decisions that affect them.*
- > Risk management, early intervention and support for wellbeing of workers during change
 - *Principle: Assessment and mitigation of WHS hazards and support for employee health and wellbeing is prioritised.*
- > Leadership
 - *Principle: Leaders provides regular, clear and timely communication and support across all levels of the organisation.*

Each category contains a series of individual, team, and organisational actions that demonstrate the principles being applied to all levels of the organisation. These actions are categorised as low risk, medium risk and high-risk indicators. Each segment corresponds to the principles of change management, and the actions are identified at the organisational, team and individual levels.

To complete the self-assessment tool, you should tick the statements that most accurately reflect where you are at in your change process. This step should be completed by a person/team with responsibility for managing the change process.

This will identify your organisation's performance and determine if any areas require improvement. Low risk areas should be monitored for continual improvement.

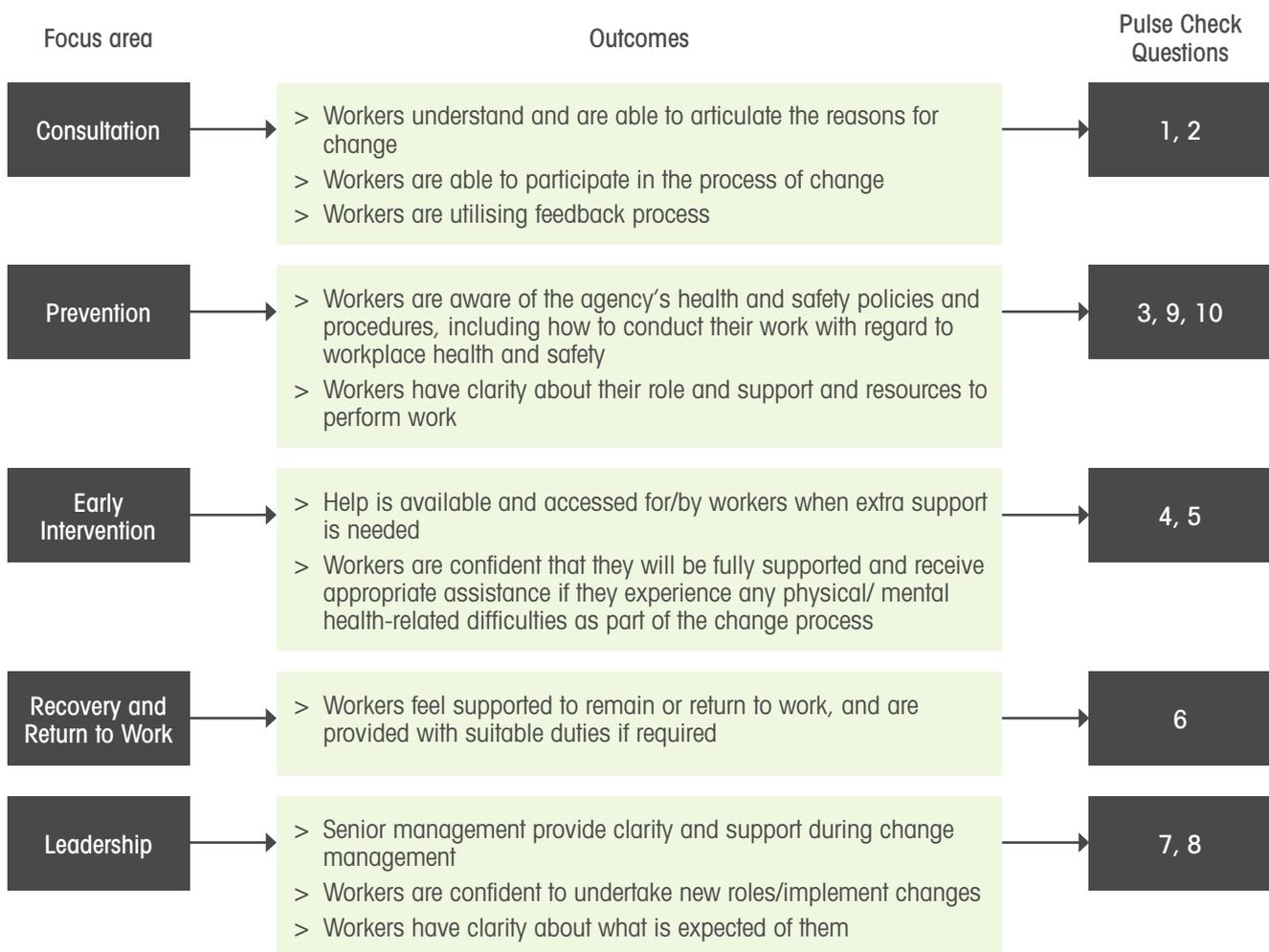
By identifying the outcome of your assessment in each category, you will be able to assess your overall performance in line with WHS priorities. This will enable you to assess risks and build prevention into your current approach.

STEP 2: VALIDATE WITH A PERCEPTIONS PULSE CHECK

The effectiveness of the actions taken can be reviewed with a worker pulse check survey, which provides a series of statements where workers can rate their level of agreement.

It is important to validate the effectiveness of your ratings with a pulse check of worker perceptions. Research shows that a positive perception of change will increase the resilience of workers during the change process. There is likely to be variation in the perception of workers and teams. By undertaking an employee pulse check, the accuracy of your self-assessment will significantly increase. This will identify where to direct targeted support.

Each statement of the pulse check relates to the outcomes of a section of the self-assessment tool. By asking workers to rate their level of agreement with the statement, you can determine how effective your consultation, leadership, and prevention and support for worker health and wellbeing during organisational change is to minimise the impact of psychological injuries and illness.



To undertake a perception pulse check, you should identify a sample of workers, which includes:

- > workers
- > frontline managers
- > health and safety representatives (HSRs)

Ten per cent of your workforce is recommended as a representative sample; however, this may not always be practical. If you have staff across multiple sites, it is useful to have a sample from each office.

Provide the sample group with Attachment B: Worker Perceptions Pulse Check and then review the results, identifying the average answer and the range of response to each question.

STEP 3: RESPOND WITH AN ACTION PLAN

After steps 1 and 2, you should develop an action plan and embed it in your organisational risk management system.

Use the information from steps 1 and 2 to create an action plan for continual improvement. Your action plan should be targeted to areas where workers have rated their agreement as low (1–2) or areas of the self-assessment you identify as high and medium risk.

It is important to ensure that your action plan:

- > has a designated leader with sufficient responsibility and up to date training to implement actions
- > clearly identifies responsibility to drive tasks
- > follows the principles of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely (SMART) goals
- > is incorporated into your organisational risk management framework, so that it is part of a holistic approach to managing psychosocial risks in the work environment.

By reviewing the corresponding sections of the self-assessment tool you can identify practical actions that can be undertaken to improve these results.

STEP 4: MONITOR AND REVIEW

Action plans are often written and not implemented. It is important that a review mechanism is implemented, and there is a person or team with responsibility to oversee the plan.

If workers are additionally stressed the change process will eventually become ineffective. WHS systems and strategies need to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

You can review your action plan by re-running a perceptions pulse check (refer back to step 2) and graphing the trends over time to monitor your progress.

For further information about managing the risks to mental health and wellbeing at work, you can refer to the following resources:

- > [People Matters with Machinery of Government Changes Factsheet *Working Together: promoting mental health and wellbeing at work*](#)
- > [Supporting mentally healthy workplaces](#)
- > [Psychosocial hazards | Comcare](#)
- > [Safe Work Australia Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties](#)

Things To Keep In Mind:

At-risk team members or cohorts should be further considered as their needs and/or requirements may be different. This includes consideration of a diverse workforce such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, and LGBTIQ+ workers.

It is also important to remember that in addition to the workplace change, teams and leadership may also experience increases in workload. In particular, those with leadership responsibilities should prioritise time with teams to consult and offer opportunities to provide feedback, time to understand new procedures and policies, and ensure a holistic and effective plan to facilitate change is developed and implemented.

Consultation is a legal requirement under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act). Section 47 of the WHS Act requires a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) –who is usually the employer—to consult, so far as is reasonably practicable, with workers who carry out work for the business or undertaking and who are (or are likely to be) directly affected by a health and safety matter. Ensure the consultation process aligns with the [Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination Code of Practice](#) (review the federal register of legislation for the “in force” version of this code).

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

ATTACHMENT A

Tick the boxes that most apply to you and find out how you rate. Name of person completing the assessment:

COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Principle: Consultation for change is comprehensive, ongoing and involves workers in decisions that affect them

1. CONSULTATION

Consultation is a requirement under the WHS Act when changes affect people at work. When consultation is conducted transparently and effectively, workers are more likely to participate in the process of change and view it more favourably. Consultation plans should comply with the Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination Code of Practice

	Maturing <i>Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement</i>	Developing <i>Review for improvements</i>	Immature <i>Immediate action required</i>
Organisational actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation plan, compliant with the code of practice, is in place, including how the results of the consultation are provided to workers <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence that change has been communicated to all workers <input type="checkbox"/> HSRs, employer forums and other groups (corporate citizens) in the organisation have been provided with ongoing information to reduce rumours and other stressors related to the changes	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation policy in place <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions about how changes can be implemented have been undertaken <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation Plan Drafted	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes have not been communicated to workers <input type="checkbox"/> Change policy not in place <input type="checkbox"/> No consultation plan developed
Team actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Managers have been briefed about the requirement for consultation during workplace change <input type="checkbox"/> All managers have personally communicated the changes to their workers including how this is relevant to the workers' role and purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback process is in place (to consider feedback)	<input type="checkbox"/> Some managers have communicated changes to their workers	<input type="checkbox"/> No support or guidance for managers to communicate change
Individual actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers have been provided with opportunity to participate in the change process through consultation sessions, meetings or discussions on change implementation <input type="checkbox"/> Workers impacted by change have been identified (including people off work) and consulted on changes that will affect them <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback process is in place (to consider feedback)	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers have been informed of changes directly impacting them <input type="checkbox"/> No Consultations Opportunity Provided	<input type="checkbox"/> PCBU has not used consultation provisions under the WHS Act
Outcomes	> Workers understand the reasons for change > Workers are able to participate in the process of change > Workers are utilising feedback process		

RISK MANAGEMENT, EARLY INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT FOR WELLBEING OF WORKERS DURING CHANGE

Principle: Assessment and mitigation of WHS hazards and support for employee health and wellbeing is prioritised

2. PREVENTION

	Maturing <i>Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement</i>	Developing <i>Review for improvements</i>	Immature <i>Immediate action required</i>
Organisational	<input type="checkbox"/> Change program has risk management plan which includes WHS risks (with consideration of harm to physical and mental health and wellbeing) <input type="checkbox"/> Risk assessments have been conducted on work arrangements (existing and new work arrangements) taking into account physical and psychosocial risks, and management of the work environment (demands, support, role clarity, control, relationships and change) <input type="checkbox"/> HSRs have been involved in risk assessment processes	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical and psychosocial risk assessments have been conducted on some work arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> HSRs and working groups in place	<input type="checkbox"/> No risk assessments conducted
Team	<input type="checkbox"/> Teams or groups who are identified to be impacted significantly by changes are provided with support/advice and training (as required) <input type="checkbox"/> Managers have been trained to identify psychosocial risks in the work environment <input type="checkbox"/> All managers have assessed the risks to physical and mental health during and after change <input type="checkbox"/> At risk/diverse team members/cohorts have been further considered and consulted with supports provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Training support advice is available to all workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers are not provided with information, training and supervision on new duties or any WHS procedures
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Inductions have been provided to workers in new work areas, or refreshed for current workers, including culture and expectations <input type="checkbox"/> The demands and controls of new roles are assessed and matched to worker ability <input type="checkbox"/> Workstation assessments have been conducted to ensure the new work environment is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Some workers have been provided with information and supervision on new duties and WHS procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Some workstation assessments have been undertaken	<input type="checkbox"/> No induction provided <input type="checkbox"/> No workstation assessments conducted
Outcomes	> Workers are aware of the agency's health and safety policies and procedures, including how to conduct their work with regard to workplace health and safety > Workers have clarity about their role and support and resources to perform work		

3. EARLY INTERVENTION

	Maturing <i>Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement</i>	Developing <i>Review for improvements</i>	Immature <i>Immediate action required</i>
Organisational	<input type="checkbox"/> Support has been offered/provided to workers regarding the changes <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation has systems in place to identify, monitor and improve early intervention trends, for example, human resource data such as absenteeism and State of the Service results <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and procedures in place to support early intervention practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Support is available, and general HR data monitoring occurs	<input type="checkbox"/> No special data monitoring or support systems identified
Team	<input type="checkbox"/> Managers have been trained to recognise and respond to early warning signs of worker distress and low morale (these include: unplanned absences, increased conflict, withdrawal and deteriorating work performance) <input type="checkbox"/> Managers have been provided with information about avenues of support for themselves and their team <input type="checkbox"/> Managers proactively initiate supportive conversations with at-risk workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Managers know how to access and utilise support for themselves <input type="checkbox"/> Managers know how to access and utilise support for their team members and themselves, and do so as needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Managers are given no support to recognise early warning signs of worker distress and low morale
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers have been provided with information regarding targeted support and assistance that is available to them (for example, EAP, HSRs) <input type="checkbox"/> Records indicate these support mechanisms are being utilised	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers are aware of support and assistance that is available to them but don't appear to fully utilise these	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers are not aware of support and assistance that is available to them
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Help is available for workers when extra support is needed > Workers are confident that they will be fully supported and receive appropriate assistance if they experience any physical/mental health-related difficulties as part of the change process 		

4. RECOVERY AT AND RETURN TO WORK (RTW)

	Maturing <i>Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement</i>	Developing <i>Review for improvements</i>	Immature <i>Immediate action required</i>
Organisational	<input type="checkbox"/> Change manager has reviewed in conjunction with people with responsibility for RTW and rehabilitation the impact on workers away from work or on a RTW program <input type="checkbox"/> Change manager has discussed with people with responsibility for RTW and rehabilitation timely and clear communication advising workers away from work or on RTW program on change and any impacts.	<input type="checkbox"/> People with responsibility for RTW and rehabilitation have reviewed the impact on workers away from work or on a RTW program	<input type="checkbox"/> The impact of change for workers who are on RTW programs or away from work has not been considered
Team	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisors/team leaders are informed of any special needs for workers before they commence with the team <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisors/team leaders meet with workers to welcome them to the workplace and consult with them on their requirements, including those who are on RTW programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant work areas are aware of workers who are on return to work programs	<input type="checkbox"/> RTW and injury management plans have not been reviewed in new team arrangements
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual risk assessments have been undertaken for workers who are on a RTW plan or currently away from the workplace to identify how changes will affect them and what adjustments may be required <input type="checkbox"/> Injured workers have been contacted and meetings arranged with relevant stakeholders, such as treating practitioners, rehabilitation case manager, RTW coordinator and supervisor, to discuss any changes to the rehabilitation program	<input type="checkbox"/> Injured workers have been contacted to discuss changes to the rehabilitation program <input type="checkbox"/> Risk assessments have been reviewed for workers who are on a RTW plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Injured workers have not been contacted to discuss changes to the rehabilitation program <input type="checkbox"/> Review of impact of change on workers away from the workplace not yet undertaken
Outcomes	> Workers feel supported to remain or return to work, and are provided with suitable duties if required > Meets requirements Under the SRC ACT		

LEADERSHIP

Principle: Leaders provides regular, clear and timely communication and support across all levels of the organisation

5. LEADERSHIP

	Maturing <i>Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement</i>	Developing <i>Review for improvements</i>	Immature <i>Immediate action required</i>
Organisational	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior managers regularly communicate with workers about change, and seek feedback about issues related to change <input type="checkbox"/> Resources allocated for change transition support team/role <input type="checkbox"/> PCBU has a workplace culture and change management strategy to support changing work arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> New teams/structures are monitored for emerging risks, and action is taken when required	<input type="checkbox"/> There has been some communication from senior managers about changes to workers and request for feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Change support function incorporated into existing people management roles	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent or minimal communication to workers from senior management about the impact of change <input type="checkbox"/> No change support function identified
Team	<input type="checkbox"/> Managers have been trained in dealing with culture change and transformation <input type="checkbox"/> Open door policy has been instituted by all managers to enable workers to talk openly about their concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Role descriptions and training needs analysis have been updated for all roles to provide job clarification	<input type="checkbox"/> Open door policy has been instituted by some managers to enable workers to talk openly about their concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Training needs analysis undertaken for new job roles	<input type="checkbox"/> No open door policy or informal communication strategy to enable workers to talk openly about their concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Training needs analysis has not yet been undertaken
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Workers are involved in documented job descriptions and training needs analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Other support mechanisms are available and have been communicated to workers, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > financial advice > career planning > job search support > counselling services 	<input type="checkbox"/> Some workers have been involved in updating job descriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Workers are provided with or reminded of details of EAP services	<input type="checkbox"/> No new job descriptions completed yet <input type="checkbox"/> EAP promoted on intranet or other central portal only
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Senior management provide clarity and support during change management > Workers are confident to undertake new roles/implement changes > Workers have clarity about what is expected of them 		

Provide workers with the questions, and rate their agreement.

This short survey is to review the perceptions and experiences of workers during [name of change management project]

Rate your agreement with these statements:

1. I understand the reason and requirements for change

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I have the opportunity to participate in the change process (such as attending forums and meetings, and providing feedback) if my work is affected by change

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I am aware of the agency’s health and safety policies and procedures, including how to conduct my work with regard to workplace health and safety

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. If I need support, I am aware of how to access support and information to assist me

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. I am confident that I will receive assistance and support if I experience any health-related difficulties (physical or mental) as part of the change process

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. My workplace supports workers to remain or return to work following ill-health, with suitable duties if required

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. Senior management and leaders provide clear instruction, detailed information and support during change

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. Senior management and leaders are open and transparent about the change process and provide feedback to issues raised by workers

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. I am confident undertaking new roles and implementing the changes required as part of the change process

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. I am clear about what is expected of me

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

For more information please see the Comcare publication Looking after your employees during times of change, available at www.comcare.gov.au.

