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) 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 injures, poor health outcomes and a decrease in productivity.

During change, organisations should focus on:

> Consultation

> Prevention

> Early intervention

> Recovery and return to work

> Leadership.

WHAT IS THE 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 risks (physical and psychosocial) associated with change that may lead to injury prior to, and after, workers have commenced work in the changed circumstances or environment.

For more information about the risks of workplace change, see *Supporting your workers during times of change*, available on the Comcare website at: www.comcare.gov.au/preventing/prevention/supporting_your_workers_during_times_of_change

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This can be used by anyone with responsibility as part of a change program. This includes change managers, WHS managers, HR Managers, project managers or people with leadership responsibilities.

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HOW TO USE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

This 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 actions, perception and response.
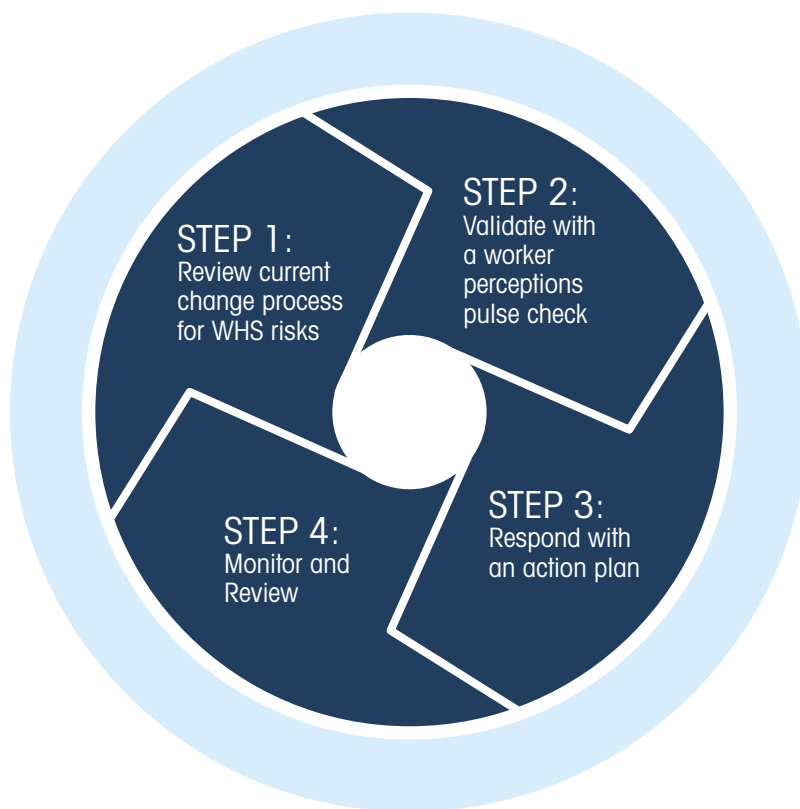
Adapted from 'How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks', Work Health and Safety Codes of Practice 2011

STEP 1: REVIEW CURRENT CHANGE PROCESS FOR WHS RISKS

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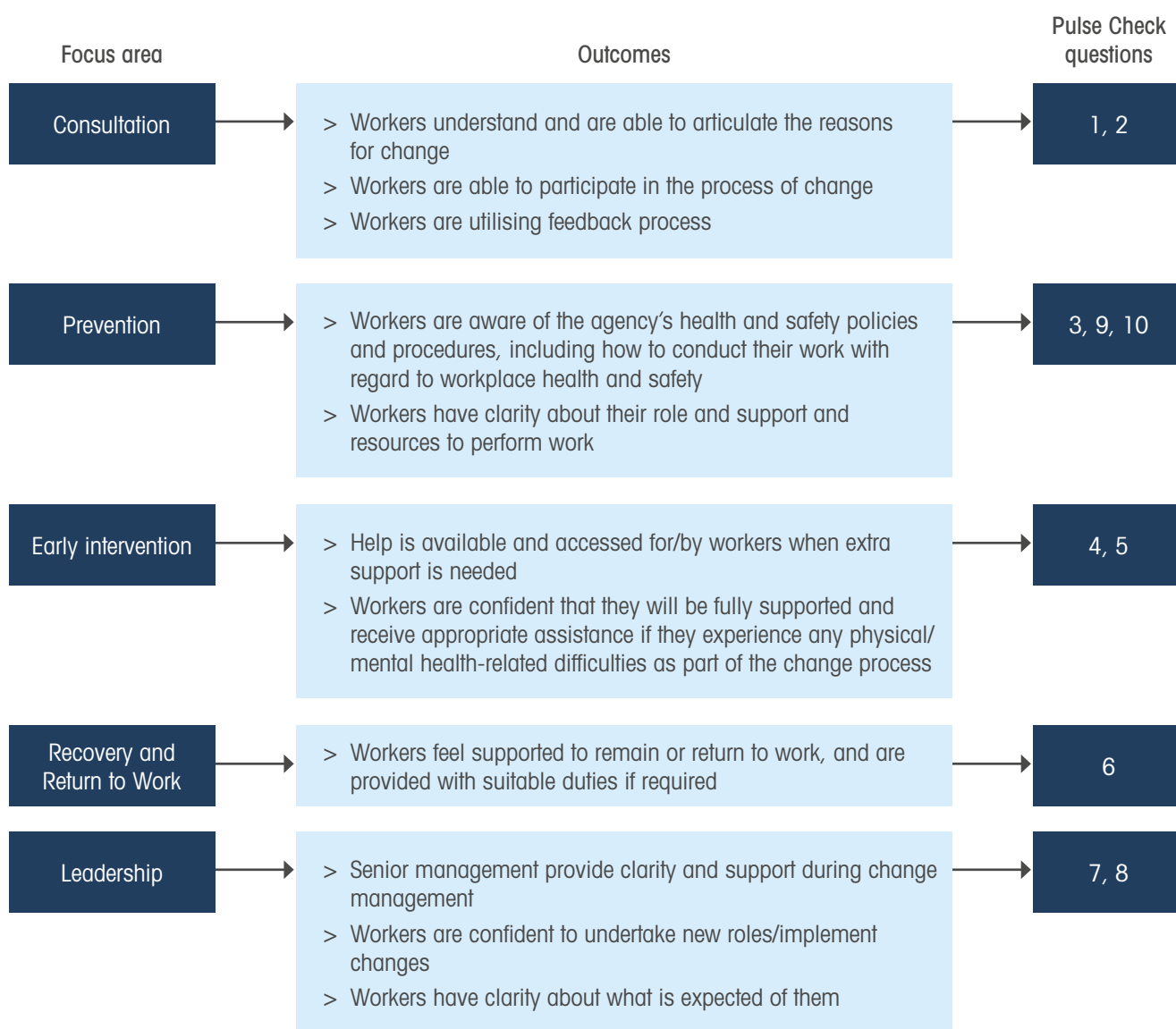
By identifying the outcome of your assessment in each category, you will be able to assess your overall performance in line with WHS priorities. **This will enable you to assess risks and build prevention into your current approach.**

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.

Focus area	Outcomes	Pulse Check questions
Consultation	> Workers understand and are able to articulate the reasons for change > Workers are able to participate in the process of change > Workers are utilising feedback process	1, 2
Prevention	> 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, 9, 10
Early intervention	> Help is available and accessed for/by 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, 5
Recovery and Return to Work	> Workers feel supported to remain or return to work, and are provided with suitable duties if required	6
Leadership	> 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	7, 8

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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: 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 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, available on the Comcare website:

> *Supporting your workers during times of change*

> *Working Together: promoting mental health and wellbeing at work*

> *Working Well: An organisational approach to preventing psychological injury*

> *Beyond Working Well: A practical approach to improving psychological injury prevention and management in the workplace*

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

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.

	Low risk *Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement*	Medium risk *Review for improvements*	High risk *Immediate action required*
Organisational actions	☐ Consultation plan in place, including how the results of the consultation are provided to workers ☐ Evidence that change has been communicated to all workers ☐ 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	☐ Consultation policy in place ☐ Discussions about how changes can be implemented have been undertaken	☐ Changes have not been communicated to workers
Team actions	☐ Managers have been briefed about the requirement for consultation during workplace change ☐ All managers have personally communicated the changes to their workers including how this is relevant to the workers' role and purpose ☐ Feedback process is in place (to consider feedback)	☐ Some managers have communicated changes to their workers	☐ No support or guidance for managers to communicate change
Individual actions	☐ Workers have been provided with opportunity to participate in the change process through consultation sessions, meetings or discussions on change implementation ☐ Workers impacted by change have been identified (including people off work) and consulted on changes that will affect them ☐ Feedback process is in place (to consider feedback)	☐ Changes have been communicated to workers directly impacted	☐ 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		

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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			
	Low risk *Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement*	**Medium risk** *Review for improvements*	**High risk** *Immediate action required*
Organisational	☐ Change program has risk management plan which includes WHS risks (with consideration of harm to physical and mental health and wellbeing) ☐ 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) ☐ HSRs have been involved in risk assessment processes	☐ Physical and psychosocial risk assessments have been conducted on some work arrangements ☐ HSRs and working groups in place	☐ No risk assessments conducted
Team	☐ Teams or groups who are identified to be impacted significantly by changes are provided with support/advice and training (as required) ☐ Managers have been trained to identify psychosocial risks in the work environment ☐ All managers have assessed the risks to physical and mental health during and after change	☐ Training support advice is available to all workers	☐ Workers are not provided with information, training and supervision on new duties or any WHS procedures
Individual	☐ Inductions have been provided to workers in new work areas, or refreshed for current workers, including culture and expectations ☐ The demands and controls of new roles are assessed and matched to worker ability ☐ Workstation assessments have been conducted to ensure the new work environment is appropriate	☐ Some workers have been provided with information and supervision on new duties and WHS procedures ☐ Some workstation assessments have been undertaken	☐ No induction provided ☐ 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		

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3. EARLY INTERVENTION

	Low risk *Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement*	Medium risk *Review for improvements*	High risk *Immediate action required*
Organisational	☐ Support has been offered/provided to workers regarding the changes ☐ 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 ☐ Policies and procedures in place to support early intervention practices	☐ Support is available, and general HR data monitoring occurs	☐ No special data monitoring or support systems identified
Team	☐ 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) ☐ Managers have been provided with information about avenues of support for themselves and their team ☐ Managers proactively initiate supportive conversations with at-risk workers	☐ Managers know how to access and utilise support for themselves ☐ Managers know how to access and utilise support for their team members and themselves, and do so as needed	☐ Managers are given no support to recognise early warning signs of worker distress and low morale
Individual	☐ Workers have been provided with information regarding targeted support and assistance that is available to them (for example, EAP, HSRs) ☐ Records indicate these support mechanisms are being utilised	☐ Workers are aware of support and assistance that is available to them but don't appear to fully utilise these	☐ Workers are not aware of support and assistance that is available to them
Outcomes	> 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 AND RETURN TO WORK (RTW)

	Low risk *Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement*	Medium risk *Review for improvements*	High risk *Immediate action required*
Organisational	☐ 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	☐ People with responsibility for RTW and rehabilitation have reviewed the impact on workers away from work or on a RTW program	☐ The impact of change for workers who are on RTW programs or away from work has not been considered
Team	☐ Supervisors/team leaders are informed of any special needs for workers before they commence with the team ☐ 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	☐ Relevant work areas are aware of workers who are on return to work programs	☐ RTW and injury management plans have not been reviewed in new team arrangements
Individual	☐ 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 ☐ 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	☐ Injured workers have been contacted to discuss changes to the rehabilitation program ☐ Risk assessments have been reviewed for workers who are on a RTW plan	☐ Injured workers have not been contacted to discuss changes to the rehabilitation program ☐ 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		

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LEADERSHIP

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

5. LEADERSHIP			
	Low risk *Demonstrates good practice; monitor and review for continual improvement*	Medium risk *Review for improvements*	High risk *Immediate action required*
Organisational	☐ Senior managers regularly communicate with workers about change, and seek feedback about issues related to change ☐ Resources allocated for change transition support team/role ☐ PCBU has a workplace culture and change management strategy to support changing work arrangements ☐ New teams/structures are monitored for emerging risks, and action is taken when required	☐ There has been some communication from senior managers about changes to workers and request for feedback ☐ Change support function incorporated into existing people management roles	☐ Inconsistent or minimal communication to workers from senior management about the impact of change ☐ No change support function identified
Team	☐ Managers have been trained in dealing with culture change and transformation ☐ Open door policy has been instituted by all managers to enable workers to talk openly about their concerns ☐ Role descriptions and training needs analysis have been updated for all roles to provide job clarification	☐ Open door policy has been instituted by some managers to enable workers to talk openly about their concerns ☐ Training needs analysis undertaken for new job roles	☐ No open door policy or informal communication strategy to enable workers to talk openly about their concerns ☐ Training needs analysis has not yet been undertaken
Individual	☐ Workers are involved in documented job descriptions and training needs analysis ☐ Other support mechanisms are available to workers, such as: > financial advice > career planning > job search support > counselling services	☐ Some workers have been involved in updating job descriptions ☐ Workers are provided with or reminded of details of EAP services	☐ No new job descriptions completed yet ☐ EAP promoted on intranet or other central portal only
Outcomes	> 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		

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WORKER PERCEPTIONS PULSE CHECK

Provide workers with the questions, and rate their agreement.

This short survey is to review the perceptions and experiences of workers during

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.

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