

Workplace Safety Consultation Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | December 2024

Important Notice

This template is provided as a general guide only. Consultation requirements are set out in WHS legislation and vary by state/territory. We recommend reviewing your specific legislative requirements and consulting a WHS professional.

1. Purpose

This policy establishes [Company Name]'s commitment to consulting with workers on health and safety matters. Consultation is both a legal requirement and a key element of effective safety management, as workers have valuable knowledge about hazards in their work.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All workers, including employees, contractors, and labour hire
- All workplaces and work activities
- All health and safety matters

3. Legal Requirements

Under the Work Health and Safety Act, [Company Name] must consult with workers who are, or are likely to be, directly affected by a WHS matter. Consultation must occur:

- When identifying hazards and assessing risks
- When making decisions about measures to eliminate or minimise risks
- When making decisions about the adequacy of facilities
- When proposing changes that may affect WHS
- When making decisions about consultation procedures
- When making decisions about resolving WHS issues

4. What is Consultation?

Effective consultation involves:

- Sharing relevant information with workers
- Giving workers a reasonable opportunity to express their views

- Taking workers' views into account
- Advising workers of the outcome

Consultation is a two-way process – it's not just informing workers, but actively seeking and considering their input.

5. Consultation Mechanisms

[Company Name] uses the following consultation mechanisms:

5.1 Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

Workers may request the election of Health and Safety Representatives. HSRs:

- Represent workers in their work group on WHS matters
- Investigate complaints from workers
- Monitor WHS measures
- Inquire into risks
- Are entitled to training

5.2 Health and Safety Committee (HSC)

If requested or where appropriate, [Company Name] will establish a Health and Safety Committee. The HSC:

- Facilitates cooperation on WHS matters
- Assists in developing WHS policies and procedures
- Reviews WHS performance
- Considers matters referred by HSRs
- Meets regularly (at least quarterly)

5.3 Direct Consultation

Where there are no HSRs, [Company Name] consults directly with workers through:

- Team meetings
- Toolbox talks
- One-on-one discussions
- Surveys and feedback forms
- Hazard reporting systems

5.4 Other Mechanisms

- Notice boards and communication boards
- Email communications
- Safety alerts and bulletins
- Intranet or online platforms

6. When to Consult

[Company Name] will consult with workers on:

6.1 Hazard and Risk Management

- Identifying hazards
- Assessing risks
- Deciding on control measures
- Reviewing control effectiveness

6.2 Changes

- Changes to work practices or procedures
- Changes to plant, equipment, or substances
- Changes to workplace layout
- Introduction of new work
- Restructures or changes affecting workers

6.3 Policies and Procedures

- Development of WHS policies
- Development of safe work procedures
- Changes to existing procedures
- Return to work procedures

6.4 Other Matters

- Provision of welfare facilities
- Training requirements
- PPE selection
- Emergency procedures
- Incident investigations

7. Consultation Process

7.1 Identify the Matter

- Identify the WHS matter requiring consultation
- Determine which workers are affected

7.2 Share Information

- Provide relevant information to workers
- Allow time for workers to understand the information
- Make information accessible

7.3 Seek Input

- Give workers opportunity to express views
- Allow reasonable time for response
- Use appropriate method (meeting, survey, etc.)

7.4 Consider Views

- Genuinely consider workers' views
- Document views received
- Explain how views were taken into account

7.5 Communicate Outcome

- Advise workers of decision/outcome
- Explain reasons, especially if views not adopted
- Keep records of consultation

8. Issue Resolution

If WHS issues arise that cannot be resolved through normal consultation:

- The issue should be raised with the supervisor/manager
- If not resolved, escalate to senior management
- Involve HSR if one exists
- Use agreed issue resolution procedures
- If still unresolved, the regulator may be contacted for assistance

All parties should work together in good faith to resolve issues.

9. Responsibilities

9.1 Management

- Ensure consultation processes are established and followed
- Provide resources for consultation
- Respond to issues raised
- Support HSRs and HSC
- Lead by example in consultation

9.2 Supervisors

- Consult with workers in their area
- Conduct toolbox talks
- Respond to worker concerns
- Escalate issues as needed

9.3 Workers

- Participate in consultation
- Raise WHS concerns
- Provide input and suggestions
- Cooperate with consultation processes

9.4 HSRs

- Represent workers in their work group
- Participate in consultation
- Raise issues on behalf of workers
- Complete required training

10. HSR Election

If workers request the election of an HSR:

- [Company Name] will facilitate the election
- Work groups will be determined in consultation
- Elections will be conducted fairly
- HSRs will be supported to undertake their role
- HSRs will be released to attend approved training

11. Training

[Company Name] supports WHS consultation through:

- HSR training (5-day initial, 1-day refresher)
- HSC member training
- Supervisor training on consultation
- Worker awareness of consultation rights

12. Records

[Company Name] maintains records of:

- Consultation activities
- Meeting minutes (HSC, toolbox talks)
- Issues raised and resolution
- HSR details and training
- Work group determinations

13. Review

This policy and consultation procedures will be reviewed:

- At least annually
- When consultation arrangements change
- When legislation changes
- At the request of HSRs or workers

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Workplace Safety Consultation Policy. I understand my right to be consulted on WHS matters and my responsibility to participate in consultation processes.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____