Designing Work to Manage Psychosocial Risks

SafeWork NSW

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Acknowledgement of Country

SafeWork NSW acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this Guide.

Copyright and disclaimer

Contents

Summary

This guide (the Guide) offers practical support for duty holders, including Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) and Officers, to use work design to manage the risk of psychosocial hazards. The information in this guide has been prepared to support duty holders comply with their obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) (WHS Act), the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017* (NSW) (WHS Regulation), and align to the NSW Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work 2021 (the Code of Practice).

A PCBU must implement control measures to eliminate psychosocial risks so far as is reasonably practicable. If that is not reasonably practicable, they must minimise psychosocial risks that may harm workers' psychological or physical health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Duty holders can most effectively and efficiently eliminate or minimise psychosocial hazards and risks by improving the design of the work, workplace, and systems of work, so workers are not exposed to a psychosocial hazard as described in clause 55A(a) of the WHS Regulation.

The WHS Regulation requires duty holders to have regard to a range of matters when determining control measures to implement, including:

- How psychosocial hazards and risks may interact and combine to create harm; and

- The sources of psychosocial risk, including the design of the work, design and layout of the workplace, how work is organised, and other matters.

Many psychosocial and physical hazards and risks emerge from the same underlying causes or work systems issues.

This guide advocates using 'systems thinking' (as described in the 'Key Terms') to consider how the different parts of a work system combine and interact to create health and safety risks, and to support or erode the effectiveness of workplace controls. By applying systems thinking, duty holders can better identify and understand these interconnections to then design systems of work that align with the WHS Regulation. It can also help them identify which work design control options are the most important or critical to workers' health and safety. The duty holder can start with these and then address remaining risks.

Work design as a control measure can therefore address the underlying root causes contributing to psychosocial hazards. This makes it a more efficient and effective risk management approach that is less reliant on human behaviour than other controls.

Users of this guide should first read the duties, requirements, and processes set out in the Code of Practice.

What this guide covers

This guide provides information on how to design work and systems to eliminate and minimise psychosocial hazards and risks as set out in the WHS Regulation and the Code of Practice.

Who this information is for

This guide primarily provides information for a PCBU, Officers (such as Board members and Executives Directors), senior managers and WHS Professionals who may be providing advice on psychosocial risk management to the PCBU and Officers.

The guide should also be read by managers from areas providing performance information to executives and senior leaders. It should also be used by areas within organisations involved in strategy and resourcing decisions that impact or may impact psychosocial risks and the use of control measures. These areas may include project management, information technology, engineering, procurement, WHS and human resources.

The guide will also be of interest to workers and their health and safety representatives (HSRs).

The Psychosocial Hazard Work Re-Design Tool (PHReD-T) was designed as an aid for developing skills, competency, and confidence in work redesign. The work redesign strategies are developed to prevent and manage psychosocial risks. It was originally developed for people with responsibilities for managing WHS, such as WHS advisors, consultants and managers, but is also relevant to a range of roles, including HR and any other managers with WHS duties. The PHReD-T is accompanied by a range of supporting materials that provide information about mental health, psychosocial risks, and work design. These include audio case studies, activities to complete, a fully worked example of the PHReD-T, and reading materials. The PHReD-T resources are practical tools to assist with applying the information in this guide.

Key Terms

For the purposes of this guide:

- **Work design** and **work redesign** are used interchangeably, noting that redesigning work to prevent or respond to a situation is likely to be a more common circumstance for PCBUs rather than the design of entirely new jobs, projects and working environments.

- **Work system** is made up of the work tasks, organisation systems, working environment system and the human system that together will deliver the products and services to internal and external customers.

- **Systems thinking** is an approach used in work design that identifies and considers the dynamic relationships between key parts of the work system and how these can be designed to eliminate or reduce risks.

- **Safe systems of work** are the integrated continually improving set of activities that together ensure work tasks, work environments, and processes are designed and managed to systematically eliminate or minimise the risk of harm to workers and others.

- A **WHS management system(s)** is how the organisation documents, measures, and reports the safe systems of work including key roles and accountabilities.

What is work design?

From a WHS perspective, work design is a methodical process which helps you understand your work context and then implement improvements to eliminate or minimise WHS risks to your workers.

Your work context is the environment and circumstances in which your organisation is operating and/or work tasks are occurring. It includes:

- Financial pressures, type and size of the business activities, products and services, supply chains and contractual arrangements and labour market

- Organisational structure, culture, and safety management systems

- Environmental working conditions and locations, technologies that are used

- Workers' skills and attributes

- Work content – what needs to be achieved by whom

- Key tasks, activities, roles, responsibilities, work interdependencies, and performance expectations

- Resources, equipment, and information

- Current psychosocial hazards and risks, and

- Effectiveness of current control measures.

Once you have a clearer understanding of your work context you are better placed to implement improvements to the design of the work and systems of work. These make sure any identified psychosocial and physical (biomechanical, chemical, and biological) hazards are eliminated or minimised so that they do not create a risk to workers' health and safety.

Work design goals and processes may differ depending on an organisation's motivations and objectives. Many different disciplines use work design to achieve their goals, such as WHS, public health, engineering, human resource, or industrial relations management professionals.

This guide's focus is from a WHS perspective.

Purpose of work design – a WHS perspective

People are central to every organisation achieving its objectives. Work design can help organisations achieve their objectives safely and more efficiently. Effective work design processes use systems thinking to help duty holders understand what factors are supporting or eroding workplace controls, and – by extension – the health, safety and performance of individuals and teams.

Workers should receive the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety and welfare from hazards and risks arising from work, so far as is reasonably practicable. Duty holders must have regard to a range of matters including how hazards and risks may interact and combine, and the sources of risk such as the poor design of work and systems of work.

Applying effective work design approaches means PCBUs are far more likely to comply with their WHS duties by eliminating or minimising hazards and risks at the source. They are also more likely to address psychosocial risks that may contribute to dangerous situations that may harm their people, equipment, operations and organisational reputation.

Designing out psychosocial hazards and risks and 'designing in' positive features to boost workers' resources can reduce stress, burnout, fatigue, work-related injury, illness and even death. It can reduce errors (and their costs), improve job satisfaction (and worker engagement and retention), and the organisation's resilience to adapt and respond to changing operational pressures and incidents.

Common psychosocial hazards and how they can lead to harm

Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response which in turn can lead to psychological or physical harm. They can stem from:

- The way the tasks or jobs are designed, organised, managed and supervised

- Tasks or jobs with inherent psychosocial hazards and risks

- The equipment, the working environment, or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments

- Social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

Psychosocial hazards are slightly different in every workplace and even between teams. They depend on the type of work being done, the controls already in place, and workers' skills and attributes.

Some of the most common psychosocial hazards are noted in Table 1. Some of these hazards may be hazardous by themselves, others may only be so if combined with other hazards.
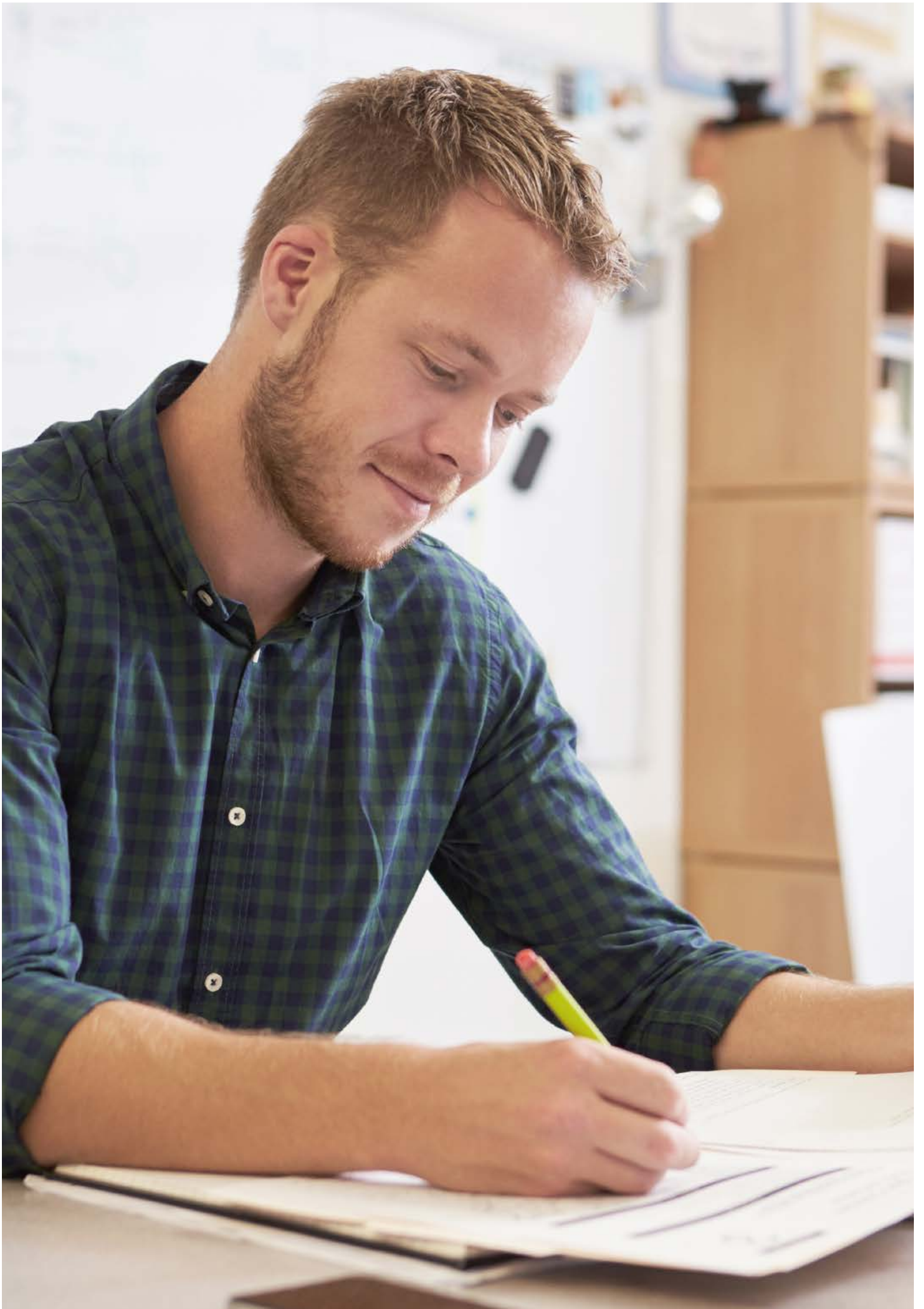
Exposure to psychosocial hazards

Duty holders must consider the nature of psychosocial hazards exposure in their organisations including:

- Who is exposed?

- How often (frequency)?

- For how long (duration)?

- What is the likely consequence (severity)?

- Whether these factors combine or interact to cause harm.

These obligations are provided for in clause 55D(2) of the WHS Regulation.

There are two broad types of exposure to psychosocial hazards and risks - both lead to harm:

- Cumulative exposures: these occur gradually and build over time which reduces a person's capacity to cope and increases stress

- One-off highly stressful events: this includes experiencing, or being exposed to, a traumatic event such as witnessing a serious injury or fatality or experiencing threats of harm, serious injury, or sexual violence.

In practice, workers can be exposed to both types of psychosocial hazards and risks. The more psychosocial and physical hazards present at any one time, the more likely it is for harm to occur.

Table 1 lists some of the most common psychosocial hazard types and examples. There may be psychosocial hazards and situations used in this guide that are not relevant to your work, or relevant to your work but not included in this guide. You can identify these hazards through systematic hazard and risk identification processes as required under clause 34 of the WHS Regulation.

Table 1: Common psychosocial hazards and examples

Hazard type	Examples
High work demands	• Long working hours that do not allow adequate recovery time or with insufficient workers • Too much to do in a set time, unachievable task deadlines or expectations • Multiple tasks that require repeated rapid switching between each to complete them, so it is difficult to concentrate • Long periods of concentration • Responding to emotionally distressing situations or clients • Physically demanding work.
Low work demands	• Too little to do, and little task variety • Highly repetitive or monotonous tasks.
Exposure to traumatic events	• Where workers provide care to those experiencing a traumatic event or listen to, view, or read detailed descriptions of harrowing and traumatic events experienced by others or first responders.
Role conflict or lack of role clarity	• Uncertainty about tenure, roles or frequent changes to tasks, work standards and schedules • Important task information is not available to the worker • Conflicting job roles, responsibilities, or expectations like providing 'good customer service,' but with insufficient time allowed to spend with customers.
Low job control	• Where workers have little control over aspects of the work, including how or when a job is done.
Poor support	• From organisational managers, supervisors, and co-workers.
Poor working environments	• Frequent work in poor quality or hazardous working environments to the extent that it evokes a physiological or stress response.

Hazard type	Examples
Remote or isolated work	• Limited access to other people, reliable communication, or technology to get practical and emotional support, if required.
Inadequate reward and recognition	• Worker's efforts are not recognised • Workers' skills and experience are under-used.
Poor procedural justice	• Where there are absent, inadequate, unfair or inconsistent applications of policies or procedures such as preferred shifts, or overtime.
Poor organisational change consultation and management significant changes	• Poor consultation or communication with affected workers about. • Poor reporting and/or investigation culture like when workers report hazards or near misses and are disciplined for having made an error.
Conflict or poor working relationships	• Between workers and their supervisors/managers • Between co-workers.
Harassment including sexual harassment	• Single or repeated incidents of forms of harassment (including but not limited to being about a person's race, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation) by managers, co-workers, clients, patients, visitors or others.
Bullying	• A person or group of people repeatedly behave unreasonably towards another worker or group of workers, creating a risk to health and safety.
Workplace aggression and violence	• Verbal abuse, being hit, bitten, spat at, scratched, kicked, or threatened with or without a weapon by clients, patients, visitors, other workers, or managers.

Many organisations consider psychosocial and physical hazards separately. In reality, psychosocial and physical hazards combine or interact to create risk, such as the combination of low job control and high demands. Organisations often fail to identify the underlying causes of risk and many settle for inadequate and lower-order control measures. These are not only less effective but also waste precious time and resources. These organisations are not complying with their WHS duties effectively.

Exposure to psychosocial hazards can lead to stress – the psychological and physical responses that occur when a worker perceives that the work demands exceed their ability or resources to cope.

Work-related stress may not itself constitute a physical or psychological injury. However, if stress is prolonged and/or severe, it can contribute to:

• Poor mental health such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders or other conditions which can cause an inability to react calmly and appropriately in difficult situations

• Muscle tension leading to pain, strains, or sprains including bodily pain and discomfort, in turn leading to fatigue, headaches and insomnia

• Impaired concentration, memory and decision making can lead to mistakes at work in turn leading to traumatic injuries

• High blood pressure, heart disease, gastrointestinal and other chronic diseases, and disorders

• Poor health behaviours like smoking, excessive use of alcohol and other addictive or illegal substances, unhealthy eating patterns and relationship and family tensions.

Good work design can help to reduce poor workplace behaviours

Organisations often become aware of poor work design and management practices as they investigate complaints about unacceptable or harmful workplace behaviours. Harmful workplace behaviours (bullying, aggression, or any form of harassment) can be by-products of underlying poor work design, systems of work and organisational culture, as well as individuals' own beliefs and attitudes.

Addressing poorly designed work, such as roles with excessive workloads, role ambiguity, or unclear systems of work, can help minimise contributing factors. These are under a PCBU's control so good work design can ensure that harmful workplace behaviours will be far less likely to arise or, if they do, that they will be manageable.

What duty holders must do to comply

The WHS legislation and WHS Regulation sets out what PCBUs must do to comply with WHS laws.

The WHS Act requires a PCBU to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers and others.

The WHS Regulation (clause 55D) states PCBUs must implement control measures—

(a) To eliminate psychosocial risks so far as is reasonably practicable, and

(b) If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate psychosocial risks—to minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

The WHS Regulation (clause 55D(2)) reinforces that the duty holder must have regard for all relevant matters when managing psychosocial risks and selecting control measures. This includes:

a. The duration, frequency, and severity of the exposure of workers and other persons to the psychosocial hazards, and

b. How the psychosocial hazards may interact or combine, and

c. The design of work, including job demands and tasks, and

d. The systems of work, including how work is managed, organised, and supported, and

e. The design and layout, and environmental conditions, of the workplace, including the provision of

   i. safe means of entering and exiting the workplace, and

   ii. facilities for the welfare of workers, and

f. The design and layout, and environmental conditions, of workers' accommodation, and

g. The plant, substances, and structures at the workplace, and

h. Workplace interactions or behaviours, and

i. The information, training, instruction, and supervision provided to workers.

Under section 16 of the WHS Act, more than one person can have a duty around the same matter that may be leading to a psychosocial risk. All PCBUs who share a WHS duty, must as far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate, and coordinate activities with each other to manage the psychosocial risks (sections 15-19 and 46 of the WHS Act).

Recommended approaches to systematically managing psychosocial risk

PCBUs are responsible for making sure psychosocial risks are systematically and appropriately managed.

The Code of Practice describes a recommended systematic process PCBUs can use to manage these risks, as shown in Figure 1.

The steps are to: identify hazards (and their sources); assess risks; control risks (through the better design of work, systems of work and other approaches); and review and monitor the effectiveness of control measures including any work designs.

The Code of Practice also clearly outlines some essential elements of an effective risk management process including:

- Leadership and management commitment
- Consulting workers and those in the duty holder's supply chains at every step
- Adequate planning and preparations (see pages 15-16 of the Code of Practice).

Figure 1: Psychosocial risk management cycle

How to identify and assess psychosocial risks to inform work design solutions

Use systems thinking

Systems thinking is an approach used in work design to help identify and better understand the dynamic relationships between key parts of the work system. It considers how these parts and relationships may create psychosocial hazards and risks, and support or erode the effectiveness of workplace controls. These insights can then be used to design out the underlying causes and to design in solutions.

This big picture approach considers the whole work system illustrated in Figure 2. This includes:

- Organisational culture, processes and practices – the management structure, team arrangements, operating and safety processes and procedures
- Equipment, tools and resources – machinery, technology, information and IT systems
- Human system – people's innate characteristics, strengths, and limitations, and the values, skills and attributes of those working in the organisation
- Work tasks – the psychosocial and physical demands of a task
- Working environment systems – workspaces, physical conditions.

PCBUs might also want to consider external factors that can impact the work system, such as the prevailing economic conditions, operating regulations and even community norms.
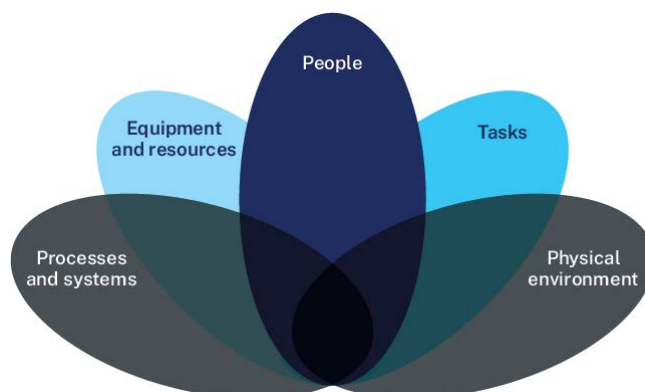
Figure 2: Work Systems

Figure 2: Caponecchia C, Mayland E, Bentley T, Farr-Wharton B, Coman R, Gopaldasani V, Jokic T, Manca D, O'Neill S, Huron V, Onnis L-a, and Green N (2022) 'Psychosocial Hazard Work Re-Design Tool (PHReD-T)', Safework NSW and NSW Centre for WHS.

Using systems thinking can also offer clues on why something that was considered an 'effective control measure' and 'safe way of working' may gradually drift towards becoming unsafe.

Consider who designs work in the organisation

To effectively identify psychosocial hazards and their causes, leaders should clearly understand who in the organisation is making decisions that directly or indirectly impacts how work is done, and how it may create psychosocial risks.

Understanding 'work as done'

It is important to have frank and open discussions with affected workers and their representatives from across your organisation to better understand how 'work is really done' in normal operating conditions, peak periods and during emergencies. You can then compare this to how work is 'imagined' and 'prescribed' (such as in position descriptions, operating and safety documents, and training materials). Doing this comparison should help organisations uncover the things that are going right and why, so you can support these to keep happening. Effective worker consultations can help you make sure future work and systems of work design are better at managing psychosocial risks in both normal and emergency situations.

In practice, work design is done by many different people within an organisation. Some of these people may not be very aware of how their decisions impact on work design, or the WHS duties and obligations of their employer or themselves. Some examples are noted in Table 2.

Table 2: How roles can influence work design

Roles	Examples of decisions impacting psychosocial risk
Organisational leaders (CEO, Officers, senior executives)	Setting organisational strategy, priorities, governance, and structure; monitoring performance; and allocating resources
Project and contract managers and setting work deadlines	Planning and coordinating projects; managing client and supplier relationships;
Line managers	Organising and allocating tasks; giving instructions; supervising individuals; setting and monitoring performance expectations; and giving practical support
Information Technology	Designing and purchasing software that dictates workflows and timeframes; and making sure staff know how to use the software
Engineers and architects	Designing equipment, processes, structures, and site layouts
Accounting, finance, equipment	Allocating budget to priorities, staff and resources; and replacing or repairing
Human resource	Setting recruitment processes, pay, conditions and working arrangements including rostering policies and performance management systems
WHS	Setting WHS strategy priorities; choosing WHS management systems; advising leadership on WHS matters including work design
Maintenance areas	Setting processes for when and how plant/equipment is inspected, tested and serviced
Teams and individual workers	Deciding how to do tasks (to the extent they have job control), providing feedback on work design options, and contributing to norms around behaviours.

Some work design decisions will also be influenced by external parties such as clients and suppliers, where clients have unrealistic expectations or suppliers are unable to meet deadlines.

To make sure work is appropriately designed and managed, duty holders should make sure:

1. Everyone is aware of how their decisions and actions impact health and safety, including those who directly and indirectly influence how work is designed and managed.

2. There is communication, consultation, coordination, and cooperation between people in your organisation around design decisions and actions.

3. You consult, cooperate, and coordinate activities with others who share a WHS duty in relation to the same matter (section 46 of the WHS Act). Others who share a duty could be, for example, a building manager, property owner or subcontractor.

4. You consult workers about matters that may affect them, either directly or through their representatives (section 47 of the WHS Act).

> SafeWork NSW's Code of Practice: Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination includes useful information to help you make sure that work design issues are adequately considered by organisations that may have shared duties.

Psychosocial hazards and risks typically arise from underlying work design issues at many different levels within an organisational system:

Figure 3: Work design issues can arise from different levels within the system

Organisational wide design issues impacting all staff, such as organisational and management restructures.

Team-level design issues, such as how work is organised and allocated.

Job and task design issues, such as excessive workloads, role ambiguity, or conflicting work priorities.

Duty holders, in managing risks to health and safety, must identify reasonably foreseeable hazards, including psychosocial hazards, that could give rise to risks to health and safety. This may include psychosocial hazards arising from poor work design which may create a psychosocial risk in the organisation. You should also consider how work design at each level combines and interacts to create psychosocial hazards and risks for workers. You must make changes to work design to manage these risks.

Work design can be done at different times. The effort required will vary depending on the goal.

Times when a duty holder should review existing work design and consider improvements include when:

- Significant organisational or workplace changes are planned, for example introduction of new equipment, new tasks, or new workspaces

- Doing major projects especially where this requires consultation, cooperation, and coordination with workers and others

- Developing a new safety procedure, or prestart safety checks for known high-risk tasks

- A new psychosocial hazard or risk is identified, or you are uncertain about current risks

- A control measure appears to not adequately be minimising the risk

- Consultation indicates a review is necessary or if requested by a HSR

- Agreed review dates (such as annually) or audit results indicate a review is needed

- A serious incident, injury, or illness occurs arising from the psychosocial risk

- A psychological injury occurs.

Common work design approaches and tools

Most organisations may already use a range of approaches to help them identify psychosocial hazards, assess risk, and monitor risk control measures. This may include, collecting:

- **Job and task level data and insights** from interviews with workers and their representatives, incident and near miss reports or position descriptions

- **Team level data and insights** from team discussions, reports to Health and Safety Committees or HSRs, feedback from unions, surveys and focus groups

- **Organisational level data and insights** from Health and Safety Committee meetings, surveys, risk registers, incident reports, illness and injury data, focus groups, grievances, complaints and existing policies or procedures

- **Outside/external information** from industry associations, unions and government bodies such as the police.

For more information see SafeWork NSW's Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work and SafeWork NSW's Guide: Measuring and Reporting WHS Information.

There are many different work design models. If you are interested in learning about some of the academic basis for these, visit the OHS Body of Knowledge.

Effective systems thinking approaches

The following section includes some suggested approaches to risk identification that organisations can use in addition to any approaches they already have in place. Most organisations should be able to apply these without the help of a specialist. In some cases, organisations might want to use an expert or a specialist to be evidence-based and minimise bias. Using external specialists may help workers feel safer to disclose sensitive information.

Apply the iceberg analogy

Duty holders should look beyond surface-level causes of a situation and seek a deeper understanding of them. Some issues are readily observable; however, it is what lies beneath that may be even more important.

It may help to ask subject matter experts and affected workers questions to better understand:

- What is the situation, issue, or event?

- How did the organisation learn about or discover the situation or issue?

- What is the duration, frequency, and severity of the exposure of workers and other persons to the psychosocial hazards?

- How may the psychosocial hazards interact or combine?

The 'Five Why?' discovery process

Repeatedly asking why a situation or psychosocial risk might arise is one of the simplest and most useful methods to better identify and understand why hazards or risks exist in the workplace.

To begin the process, first collect some basic information about the psychosocial hazard or risk:

- Why a psychosocial hazard or risk is present?

- How might the psychosocial hazards interact or combine to cause harm?

- What are the underlying root causes for the psychosocial hazard or risk?

- How might a chain of problems lead to harm or a control measure not working?

Once you have collected this information, ask 'Why?' this might have happened. This process should help give a clearer picture of the underlying issues and contributing causes. Asking a 'why?' question five times comes from the observation that this number is usually sufficient to reveal the main causes and factors behind an issue. To get the best results, make sure the person leading this process is competent and impartial.

Appendix 1 has some additional information to help with a 'Five Why' discovery process.

Complete a job or task hazard analysis

A task hazard analysis describes the overall task goals (what needs to be achieved). Then it systematically uses a top-down approach to break down the key steps of the task and describe the required actions and the relationships between each.

The technique can be used to gain insights into psychosocial hazards and risks, safety critical decisions, and dependencies (like other workers' actions, or essential information and equipment needed if work is to be completed safely and on time and to budget).

It can also help uncover common 'workarounds' (both beneficial and dangerous) and noncompliance with work procedures.

Jobs can include many tasks and elements. From a WHS perspective it is helpful and more efficient to focus on those associated with the highest risk of harm, rather than do a task hazard analysis for every task that makes up a whole job.

The first step, therefore, is to look at the inherent requirements of the job. Based on that information then choose the most hazardous tasks within that job and undertake a task hazard analysis for each.

The task hazard analysis should describe the:

- Goal(s) of each task – what needs to be achieved, and any other relevant information such as when the task needs to be completed

- Sequential steps – some will be observable like physical actions; others will require workers to describe the processes and decisions that then result in the actions

- Dependencies – equipment, activities or information from others that is needed to do the task safely and correctly within a set timeframe

- Important 'safety' decision points – such as when a task may need to stop if a control measure is not in place, and if so, what needs to be done and who needs to know about this

- Who needs to do each step – how many staff of what skill level, essential training, or qualifications

- Actual and possible psychosocial and (where relevant) physical hazards and risks – such as cognitive/mental, emotional, and physical demands of the task
- How task demands may be different – for novices compared to experienced staff.

Whether or not you need to keep breaking tasks down into finer detail depends on whether this will reveal further useful information about psychosocial hazards and risks.

A task hazard analysis is best represented and understood as a flow diagram. Appendix 2 has some additional information about this process.

Look for excessive cognitive and emotional demands

All work requires cognitive and emotional effort. Many organisations may not currently pay enough attention to these important demands.

It is an important part of the task analysis to consider the cognitive task demands, such as the need for attention, perception, memory, active listening, and decision-making.

Emotional demands might include:

- The need to show empathy, compassion, respectful service and politeness even when customers are being abusive
- Reading and responding to distressing content legal officers reading court transcripts
- Supervisors carrying out difficult management decisions around redundancies and performance management.

A cognitive and emotional task analysis builds on, or could be incorporated into, the job or task hazard analysis described above. It should provide additional information to help unpack the thought processes and decision making that underlie workers' observable actions, including both useful 'workarounds' and those that may lead to errors.

This analysis is particularly important when tasks are being automated and workers may need to quickly diagnose and respond to situations that were not anticipated by engineers or designers. It's also important in novel situations when workers might be under time pressure and/or experiencing stress.

Once organisations understand what, when and why problems might arise due to excessive cognitive and emotional demands, you can design appropriate decision support systems, including training and supervision. This includes allowing workers (where they have appropriate skills and experience) reasonable control to flexibly respond to these problems as they arise.

While duty holders may need the help of an ergonomist or organisational psychologist to do a comprehensive analysis of this type, they can start by discussing with workers the things that may influence their thought and emotional processes and responses.

Start by asking workers questions which help you understand:

- What information is the most important to do the task?
- What are you noticing and thinking about and feeling as you solve problems and make decisions?
- Why do you believe workers might sometimes make good decisions or mistakes?
- What things or situations within the organisation might be making this more or less likely?
- How do you believe might this be different for experienced versus novice workers and why might this be so?
- How do workers know an abnormal or dangerous situation is developing, and why might it be missed by you or others?
- How are workers solving problems and making decisions? Start by asking workers to describe step by step how they do the task, and if they think this is effective
- What do you think might help you prioritise tasks better, make important information clearer, minimise distractions, and so on? It can be helpful to ask workers to tell a story of how they did the task and an occasion where things went right or wrong and why.

Use prestart or work briefings as an opportunity to identify/assess hazards and design tasks

Prestart checks (when done well) are an example of a rapid and often informal task analysis process. These are often used shortly before a task starts where residual risks remain that may rapidly change over the shift. Prestart checks can be included in safety huddles, handovers, and meetings, and so on.

Prestart checks can be part of a safe system of work if done well with adequate time and genuine worker participation, and not just as a 'compliance tick and flick' exercise. They can be especially useful when the process is done at 'the point of risk' just before workers will be experiencing the risks. Then they are more likely to reflect the 'work as done' rather than 'work as imagined or hoped for.'

The prestart check can be useful for:

- Raising workers' awareness of potential residual serious hazards and risks
- Improving coordination and communication about important tasks, steps, and control measures

- Leading to changes in the task design as workers agree on realistic workable controls and safe workarounds to problems
- Notifying and escalating to management where required that unacceptable risks remain.

Take the opportunity to consider how prestart checks are done in your organisation and if they can be better designed.

There are several well recognised serious threats to the accuracy of risk assessments. One of these is that people are prone to bias. It is important that the assessment of the likelihood and consequences of psychosocial risks is based on sound evidence, not opinion. Do not guess or make assumptions. Make sure you collect and use relevant evidence and, if required, involve experts to manage potential biases in your identification, assessment, and work design processes.

The best risk identification and work design approaches will use 'subject matter experts'. These may include experienced workers, HSRs, Health and Safety Committee members, managers, WHS staff and sometimes even unions or customers familiar with the common psychosocial risks, challenges, and solutions. Involving a diverse group can help to address bias and knowledge gaps.

Larger organisations may also choose to get assistance from design specialists like ergonomists/human factors, psychologists, or engineers (who can use objective work measurement and visual representation tools).

Use psychosocial risk assessment tools

Many organisations are choosing to use the free People at Work Psychosocial Risk Assessment Survey Tool. This is an online, well-validated and confidential tool that you can use to survey groups of workers (20 or more) about their experience with common psychosocial risks and some biomechanical risks. The risks the tool focuses on align with those in the Code of Practice. The tool automatically generates a results report that can be used and interpreted by experienced WHS or HR professionals.

Leaders can choose to ask staff from across their whole organisation to complete the survey. This will help you identify common psychosocial hazards and which teams are most at risk, so you can then prioritise work design for these groups. Alternatively, if you already know the teams or work areas who are more likely to be at risk of psychosocial hazards, you can survey those groups only.

The People at Work website includes numerous resources to assist Australian duty holders to design work and manage risks. While these best suit medium to large-sized organisations, the site also includes some useful tips and information for smaller organisations.

Other proprietary validated psychosocial surveys and tools are available. Most require the assistance of an experienced human factors specialist or organisational psychologist to use and interpret them.

Explore workload issues

If the task analysis, surveys, or other processes have identified that inappropriate workloads are an issue, explore this further.

You may be able to tell your workers have inappropriate workloads through evidence of long working hours; regular reports from workers of feeling rushed (excessive time pressure); conflicting work priorities; poor match of tasks with worker skills; some workers routinely missing their breaks; or reports from workers of fatigue and stress.

You can use the approaches below to learn more about workload issues in your organisation. For the best results, these are best used in conjunction with systems thinking and hazard analysis approaches.

Workload focus groups

These are a relatively straightforward way to collect information. They can supplement data and insights from surveys indicating that workloads are perceived as a serious problem. You can get further insights on problems or issues from the group, as well as work design suggestions from subject matter experts including affected workers. The People at Work website has information on how to run these focus groups. Remember to carefully choose competent and trusted people to run these sessions.

Industry specific workload tools.

Some sectors like health, education, aviation, and defence have specialised workload tools and algorithms. These can help document key tasks, timelines, resources, dependencies, priorities, and allocate human and financial resources. However, they are usually based on very strict assumptions and rarely use systems thinking. They may not adequately consider how psychosocial hazards interact to generate perceptions of high workloads. If you use these tools, combine them with other data and information sources.

Time and motion studies, monitoring heart rates, eye movements and other physiological measures are increasingly available tools. However, they are expensive as they require experts to use and analyse them. They are probably unnecessarily complicated for most organisations. If you do use them, make sure you also use other information sources to identify psychosocial risks and the system issues which underly these.

How to use work design as a psychosocial risk control measure

Psychosocial control measures are the wide range of measures that could be put in place to manage a psychosocial risk at work. PCBUs need to use a combination of control measures.

The goal of your work design process should be to eliminate psychosocial hazards by designing the work tasks, organisation, working environment and equipment so workers are never exposed to that hazard. Only if that is not reasonably practicable, then minimise psychosocial risks through improved design of the work, workplace, plant, structures, and the systems of work.

Following the steps recommended in the Code of Practice, once you have identified and assessed the key underlying cause of the psychosocial risks and prioritised these, you can move to step 3 to consider work design options to control the risks. Part of this step will be to test and put in place appropriate design solutions.

Figure 4: Step three implement psychosocial risk control

Apply the principles of effective work design

The WHS Regulation (clause 55D) and related Code of Practice calls out specific matters (see page 13 of this guide) to consider when choosing and putting in place control measures.

Safe Work Australia's handbook *Principles of good work design* lists three WHY, three WHAT and four HOW work design principles (as shown in Figure 5) that can underpin the design process.

Figure 5: Principles of good work design
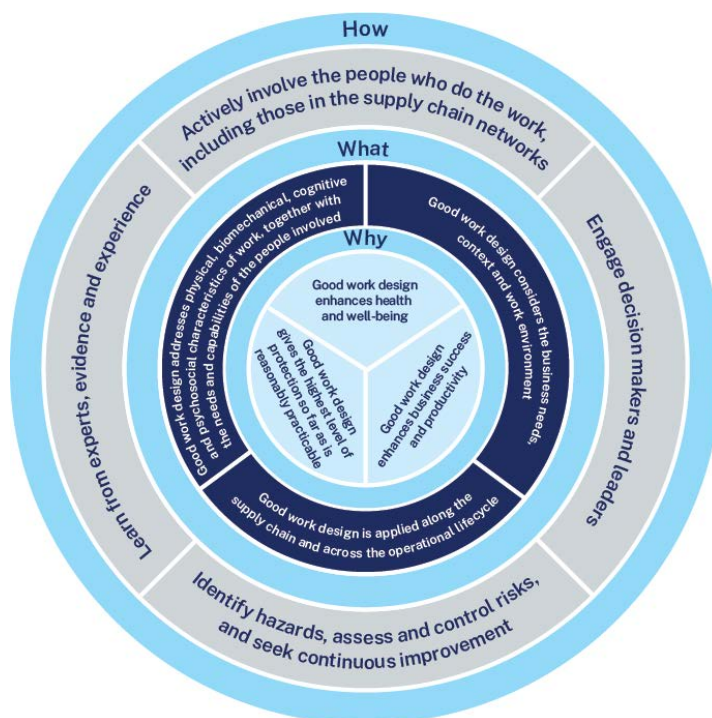
Figure 5: SafeWork Australia (2020) Principles of Good Work Design, SafeWork Australia, accessed 22 November 2022

This guide suggests some additional principles on how to design work. These are to:

1. Actively involve the people who do the work, including those in supply chains and networks

2. Engage decision-makers and leaders in the work design process

3. Identify hazards and assess risk using a range of tools and approaches

   • Apply systems thinking techniques

   • Use your organisational data and intelligence

   • Use task analysis, prestart checks

   • Use psychosocial risk assessment tools

   • Know who designs work in your organisation – who is making key decisions that directly or indirectly impact the psychosocial risks

   • Build trust and respect so workers report issues – this is more likely if there is a 'just culture' that recognises honest honest mistakes that are generally a product of poor work design and cultures.

4. Learn from experts, evidence, and experience

5. Control risks at the source and seek to continuously improve work design

   • Ensure those who design work are competent – that they understand the WHS duties and requirements, have the appropriate knowledge about psychosocial hazards and risks and sources of risk, and work design expertise

   • Apply good project planning and management

   • Design for (organisational) resilience – recognise that work systems and people change over time and with these, new psychosocial risks may emerge, and old ones can re-emerge. Organisations need to have a resilient workplace health and safety management system (WHSMS) that can anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions to manage psychosocial risks.

Consider the hierarchy of control measures and psychosocial risks

The PCBU must implement control measures 'so far as is reasonably practicable' to make sure that you have eliminated psychosocial hazards. The best way to do this is by designing the hazard out.

If that is not reasonably practicable, then the duty holder must have regard to all relevant matters in clause 55D(2)to minimise psychosocial risks. This should include considering whether it is reasonably practicable to wholly or partly substitute the hazardous way of working with a safer alternative(s). Two important steps to achieve this are to improve the design of work or change the system(s) of work.

While a PCBU is not obliged to use hierarchy of control (HoC) measures under clause 55C of the WHS Regulation, a PCBU may use HoC measures if this helps you choose and communicate the most effective control measures to decision makers and workers in the organisation. Importantly, it is worth noting that this exception (not being obliged to use HoC) only applies with reference to psychosocial risks.

Work design approaches to psychosocial risk control

Work design approaches aim to use a combination of control measures which:

• **Optimise** the mental, emotional, and physical work and task demands (i.e. making sure these are manageable, not too high or too low)

• **Increase** things which make it easier for workers to cope with these demands (also known as job resources). This could include:

– Increased job control so workers can take rest breaks when they need

– Increased role clarity to reduce uncertainty and improve how tasks are coordinated and scheduled, so there are no conflicting work priorities

– Increased communication and respectful relationships between work areas

– Giving correct and necessary information, tools and equipment

– Giving practical support including supervision and instruction during complex and new tasks

– Giving opportunities to learn and use new skills

– Giving encouragement and emotional support to deal with difficult situations

– Setting up predictable rosters and shifts.

Your psychosocial hazard identification and assessment steps should produce a wide range of possible work design solutions for you to consider and apply where appropriate.

In the next section there are some more suggestions on how to address some of the most common poor work design and management issues that impact psychosocial risk. The Code of Practice pages 28-37, and Appendix 3 of this guide, have examples of common scenarios with work design as a psychosocial risk control measure.

> Due to the nature of their tasks, some workers (such as truck drivers, or open-cut coal mine operators) have very little job control. Where this is the case, it is even more important that they are adequately consulted, and other work design options are put in place to moderate psychosocial risks.

Address organisational-wide design issues

Many psychosocial risks may impact multiple teams across organisations. For example, risks such as the design and maintenance of IT systems, new or existing technologies or infrastructure, tensions around office relocations or restructures, and hours of work and/or rosters.

Typically, you can address these through early effective communication and genuine consultation with workers about the issues. This can help to reduce uncertainty and make sure proposed changes are appropriately planned and done.

If a SafeWork NSW Inspector visits and the duty holder has identified these issues, we will expect you to be able to show how you have genuinely consulted with workers and taken their views into account.

An organisation was planning to upgrade its ageing IT equipment and software. The original procurement and rollout plan was scheduled to take three months. When it consulted with workers, the organisation realised it had not built in training or piloting of the new software with experienced and novice users into this timetable.

The organisation extended the rollout to include a pilot stage. This led to the organisation finding out it needed to change software to streamline processes and reduce mental workloads. The pilot also showed even experienced workers would need several days training to operate the program and would have an increased mental workload until they got used to the new system. The organisation gave all workers training and reduced its work output expectations while workers became skilled at using the program. The IT team provided practical support and help for several weeks after the rollout.

Improve project planning and management

Planning to deliver services, produce goods, manage fit-outs, move offices, downsize or upsize, recruit staff and design organisational structures are all part of normal business operations.

It can be easy to overlook applying good work design when embarking on these 'business as usual' projects. However duty holders should think about work design at all stages of a project. Sometimes it can help to use project management tools to think about work from concept through to closure.

There are opportunities to proactively find and manage key psychosocial risks effectively from the start of the project. Doing this will often help you avoid costly redesign issues or workarounds that may lead to poorer results than you had originally pictured.

There are legal duties and obligations for PCBUs to make sure that psychosocial and physical risks to the health and safety of workers and others are effectively managed throughout the entire life cycle of a project. This includes duties to, as far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate and coordinate with all other persons who have a duty in relation to the same matter (section 46, WHS Act 2011), and to have regard to the design of work, to eliminate or minimise psychosocial risks as is reasonably practicable (clause 55D, WHS Regulation).

Figure 6: Project Design and the Opportunity and Cost of Changes
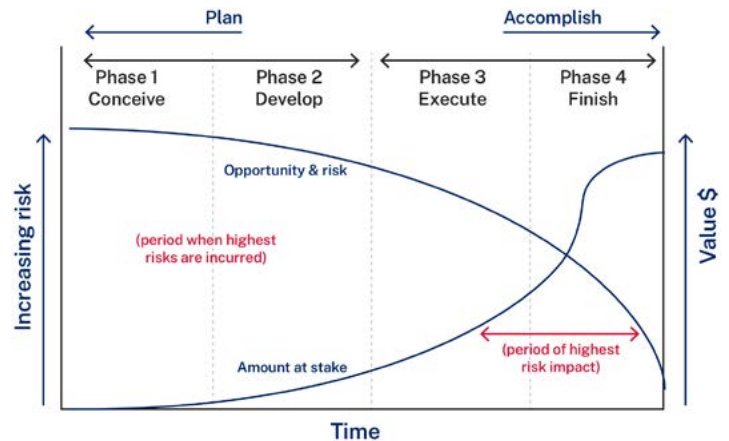
Figure 6: Kaveh Miladi Rad, O. Aminoroayaie Yamini (2017) 'The Importance and Use of Risk Management in Various Stages of Construction Projects Life Cycle (PLC)', Modern Applied Science, 11(1): 48-54, doi:10.5539/mas.v11n1p48

Unfortunately, despite the legal requirement to consult with other duty holders and workers so far as is reasonably practicable, many organisations do not routinely include workers and WHS subject matter experts in project planning, especially during the concept and development phases.

Typically, WHS staff and workers are only consulted immediately before or during implementation (execution), when the opportunities to make significant design changes are usually low and the cost of any changes is higher (see figure 6). Organisations therefore miss important opportunities to improve work design.

Organisations must make sure they genuinely consult, coordinate and cooperate with other duty holders, relevant workers and local subject matter experts at the start and throughout the entire project lifecycle.

Project management tools can be very useful. However, remember these are often based on the 'work as imagined' rather than 'work as done.' To make sure your projects reflect your organisation's real timelines and dependencies, and capture the real human and financial resources needed, consult your workers. Some project management tools may be complex to use and interpret. To help create a culture of trust, explain them simply to affected workers.

Put in place workload planning and review systems

PCBUs must make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, they provide and maintain safe systems of work. This includes considering the design and management of workload in peaks and troughs. This duty rests with the PCBU and cannot be delegated or contracted out (sections 14 and 272 of the WHS Act).

Line managers are often responsible for the day-to-day decisions around workloads. PCBUs should give these managers reasonable flexibility and autonomy so they can effectively manage staff workloads and make adjustments to deal with day-to-day changes. In turn, managers should give information to the PCBU and senior leaders so they can take appropriate action to address workloads if needed.

Inappropriate workloads (i.e. those that are too high or too low, too frequently) is one of the most common psychosocial risks and good work design is essential for it to be effectively managed. It is important to remember workload is the amount of work to be achieved and the difficulty to do the work in the allowed time. Workloads are inappropriate if the amount and difficulty of work mean that staff regularly need to miss their lunch breaks or work beyond normal hours, at excessive speeds. When workers have too little to do in the time or where most of their tasks are boring and monotonous, this can also present a WHS risk that PCBUs must manage so far as is reasonably practicable.

Most organisations will have workload peaks and troughs across a month, week or even a day. Examples are when staff are on leave or end of month reconciliations are due for finance teams. Importantly, most of these are or should be reasonably foreseeable. Even when they can't be, there should be controls in place to manage these if they arise. Effective planning for high workload periods or if there is an emergency will help with this.

Organisations should effectively design and monitor the workloads of individuals, teams and divisions. This is especially important when you make significant changes to the way work is organised or completed. Times when this may happen are:

- When introducing new services or products, or changing existing ones

- During organisational restructures and staff recruitment

- During changes to the way work is organised and managed

- During periods of staff shortages and absences due to sick leave or failure to recruit.

Signs workloads may be inappropriate:

- Reports from staff, managers, HSRs and customers about poor service or product quality

- Outcomes of workplace surveys such as the People at Work Psychosocial Risk Assessment, or other staff consultation processes

- Failure of individuals or teams to achieve production goals or targets

- Work backlogs and increased errors or product wastage

- Failure to follow safety procedures because staff say it takes too long to do it that way

- High rates of overtime, unspent recreation leave, accrued days off or time off in lieu

- Unacceptable workplace behaviours and poor organisational culture

- Decreased worker engagement and interactions with other team members

- WHS incidents or workers' compensation claims attributed to high workloads

- Above average unplanned absences, such as sick leave and staff resignations.

You should use this information to inform work design decisions.

When deciding the right mix of skills and staff needed to do a task, the duty holder should make sure that:

- You allocate work based on realistic, accurate and timely data and information, not best case scenarios. Duty holders must take into account actual staff numbers and their skills, public holidays and leave. You must include reasonable allowances if there are unscheduled staff absences

- You comply with WHS and industrial legislation, awards, and agreements

- Workers should not be required to do work that significantly and regularly exceeds ordinary working hours. This includes when there is urgent or unexpectedly high volumes of work that is short-term; when it is for a specified time; or where there are essential unplanned service needs, like emergency management

- Your decisions and distribution of workload is fair

- You consider individual and team training, skill, knowledge, career development and work-life balance, including home responsibilities

- You consider current and future workforce initiatives such as flexible work arrangements, employee health, safety and wellbeing and the impacts of organisational change such as workforce renewal and redundancy

- You have clear, well understood, and fair workload management processes. Your organisational culture should encourage workers to promptly report workload issues and feel comfortable suggesting practical solutions to their supervisors so these can be promptly addressed.

In a busy regional hospital staff were reporting feeling stressed and exhausted by the workloads and frustrated when shifts changed at short notice. The nurse manager made sure the rosters were filled and was aware of staff shift preferences, accommodating these wherever possible. She liaised with HR and made sure the rosters were released earlier so swaps could be made in plenty of time. She also responded to some staff requests to provide more variety and rotated them across wards so they could develop and use new skills.

Make sure tasks are clearly defined and prioritised

Simple approaches are often overlooked as part of work design. One such approach is making sure key tasks are clearly defined and described so everyone understands what needs to be done by whom and when.

Related to this is deciding and letting workers know what the priority tasks are and planning what order to do them in. Tools like a modified Eisenhower decision matrix (see Figure 7) can assist. These tools can help to prioritise tasks that are both urgent and important, so should be done first.

Figure 7: Modified Eisenhower task matrix

As well as identifying important and urgent tasks, it is helpful for a team to agree together which tasks need inputs or have dependencies on others, either within or outside the team; which tasks may be more complex and take longer to do; and what order they prefer to do them in. Where possible, managers should schedule tasks that are complex or that need help from others for times of the day (or times of a project) when workers are less likely to be fatigued and time pressured.

Discuss with the workers how complex tasks can be best scheduled

We all have our own working styles and preferences so, as far as possible, this needs to be balanced with giving workers reasonable job control so they can manage their own fatigue and stress.

Improve the work person fit

The risk of psychological or physical harm will increase whenever there is a poor job to person fit or match. That is, the demands of the work don't align with the worker's knowledge, skill, ability, and work interests.

This is a reasonably foreseeable risk. Duty holders must design work, so far as reasonably practicable, to be free from risk to health and safety and then appropriately match available staff to the task. You must carefully consider the inherent requirements of the role. These

are the essential duties, necessary knowledge, licenses, experience, and mental, emotional, and physical skills, a worker needs to perform the tasks safely and well. Reasonably accommodating peoples' work interests and passions can be highly beneficial and increase motivation and engagement.

Remember some workers may be at higher risk from the same psychosocial and physical hazards due to:

- Limited experience, such as in new or young workers, apprentices, and trainees

- Barriers to understanding safety information, due to literacy or language challenges

- Perceived barriers to raising safety issues by workers with job insecurity

- Certain attributes – such as sex, race, religious beliefs, pregnancy, gender identity, sexuality, age, or a combination of these – that may put them at risk of behavioural psychosocial hazards like bullying or harassment

- An injury or illness preventing them from performing their full or normal duties, or

- A lack of interest in the task, so finding it boring and unmotivating work.

Consult your workers to help identify who may be at greater risk, and what further work designs (so far as is reasonably practicable) you can put in place to manage risk for them.

You should also check that you consider the inherent requirements of the work, and work-person fit, during recruitment processes. You must comply with anti-discrimination legislation when you do this. Information and resources on this can be found at Anti-Discrimination New South Wales.

An organisation was finding it hard to recruit someone with an ideal work fit. To fill the position, they ended up appointing an inexperienced young worker who didn't have all the skills and attributes the organisation was looking for. The supervisor recognised this meant the worker and their teammates may therefore have increased psychosocial risks. To manage the situation, the supervisor made sure the worker did the general induction. Each day he met with the new staff member to go through the tasks and discuss the work priorities. The supervisor showed him how to operate the equipment but, because the worker did not speak English well, the supervisor was worried the worker might not really understand his instructions. The supervisor asked him to operate the equipment in front of him so he could check he was using it properly. Over the next few weeks, the supervisor kept checking in and made sure he provided clear feedback when the worker needed to do things differently and praised him as his skills improved.

Design administrative controls to support safe and healthy work

Design safe systems of work

The systems of work are the organisational rules, policies, procedures, and work practices used to organise, manage, support, and carry out work. When designed well these can help to make work safer and more efficient. When done poorly they can themselves be a source of stress or may be ignored by workers.

Before outlining how to use safe systems of work or administrative control measures to control psychosocial risks, it's important to note they do not control hazards at the source. They rely on human behaviour, needing people to be effective supervisors and monitors. So, while they can help PCBUs minimise psychosocial risks, they are not reliable or effective on their own. If you use these as your main psychosocial risk control measure, you will not meet the required WHS standards.

As noted earlier, many different people in organisations may be involved in designing and/or managing systems of work, such as human resources staff, WHS teams and line managers. These groups of people must work together to design the systems of work and consult with affected workers while keeping WHS as their overriding priority.

Task rotation

Task rotation is a work procedure that aims to minimise risk by limiting the amount of time and/or number of times a worker is exposed to a hazard. It can be used as part of job control to allow workers to choose (within reason) the order they do tasks, to help reduce boredom and fatigue.

Another way to do task rotation is to have team members take turns doing the task. Managers can do this to give workers increased task variety and chances to use their skills (reducing workers' boredom, helping them grow new skills and increasing ways of coping).

However, task rotation does not eliminate the underlying hazard. Workers will be exposed to the hazard, just for shorter periods. So task rotation should not be your organisation's main control measure and ideally you should only use it as a short-term intervention until you can put better design solutions in place.

Organisational rules, policies, and procedures

WHS rules, policies, and safe work procedures include acceptable workplace behaviours, working arrangements and conditions. To be effective, workers must know about them, find them beneficial, and use them. To achieve this, PCBUs must consult affected workers or their representatives when designing rules, policies, and procedures. You should also consult workers after they have been introduced to find out if they are still effective.

The rules, policies and procedures should:

- Clearly describe -

    - Psychosocial risks and how these will be managed

    - Management and workers' WHS responsibilities

    - What to do if a workplace incident occurs

- Be in languages and formats that suit affected workers

- Make sure resources are put somewhere where workers can easily find them when they need them, such as by using QR codes or by clearly displaying them on your intranet or notice boards.

Improve information, instruction, training and supervision

If there are still risks to workers after a PCBU has put work design processes in place, you must tell your workers about them. You must also tell workers what control measures you have introduced and what they should do to make sure they and others are psychologically and physically healthy and safe. This includes giving them appropriately designed information, training (including required certificates to undertake the work), instruction and supervision as required by WHS Regulation (cl.55D(2)(i)).

The types of information, instruction, training, and supervision to give workers are noted in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Types of information, instruction, training and supervision

Work tasks	Tell workers: • What needs to be done and by when • How to do tasks and operate equipment safely and well • What the psychosocial risks are and how these are controlled. Give them appropriate training to manage, supervise and support others.
Systems of work	Set up clear, simple, and known organisational policies and procedures to manage and carry out the work.
Communication and interpersonal capabilities	Tell workers what communication style to use, and when. For example, give instructions on how to use a two-way radio to communicate in noisy environments, or how to do a pre-start check before a shift.
Team management	Manage staffing levels, allocating tasks, budgets, mentoring and supervision and so on.
Use of PPE	Tell workers what PPE must be used when and how to use it.

SafeWork NSW does not consider interventions that do not eliminate or minimise the psychosocial risk to be a sufficient psychosocial risk control measure. These can include mental health awareness (Employee Assistance Programs, mental health de-stigmatisation programs) and physical well-being programs (yoga, weight loss, gym, exercise, or healthy eating programs).

Give suitable personal protective equipment

PCBUs must give personal protective equipment (PPE) to help control physical risks, where required. For example, workers may need to have personal duress or emergency alarms where there is a risk of assault or when working in remote locations, and adequate respiratory protective equipment when they are likely to be exposed to hazardous substances. Inadequate PPE may lead to an increase in stress and presents a risk to health and safety.

Deciding what work designs are reasonably practicable

The term "reasonably practicable" refers to a standard that a PCBU is (or was at a particular time) reasonably able to do to ensure the health and safety of workers and others, while taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters (section 18 of the WHS Act). You must consider:

• The likelihood of the psychosocial hazard or the risk occurring within your organisation

• The degree of harm it might cause

• All the suitable ways you could eliminate or minimise the psychosocial risk

• What you know or ought to know about these types of hazards or risks in your organisation and industry, and how to eliminate or minimise them

• The availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk.

SafeWork NSW Inspectors consider whether an employer has or has not done all that they reasonably can to protect their workers' health and safety.

SafeWork NSW expect that duty holders will always put in place the highest reasonably practicable level of risk control for affected workers. When duty holders are deciding what work design changes to make, you need to decide what is reasonably practicable in your circumstances.

To help you decide what is reasonably practicable, consider:

• As many possible control measures as you can

• Which are the most effective

• Which are reasonably practicable in your circumstances.

Only after you have assessed the size of the risk and effective ways to eliminate or minimise it can you think about the cost of putting controls in place. If the cost of a work design strategy is very disproportionate to the risks, it may be that using that design strategy is not reasonably practicable and therefore you do not need to use it. This does not mean that you do not need to take action to control the risk. You must use a less expensive way of minimising the risks instead. If two control measures provide the same level of protection and are equally reliable, you can use the less expensive option.

Remember you can't guess the cost of a control measure. To be able to justify to a SafeWork NSW Inspector that the cost a control measure was not reasonable, you must have clear and valid evidence. Duty holders must be able to show an inspector, if asked, realistic calculations of the costs over the short and longer term to justify your decision. Inspectors will not accept as a valid excuse that you did not know about the availability or cost of a control measure, in circumstances where you should know.

To check you have done everything that is reasonable to do, PCBUs must make sure you have carefully considered everything that may be relevant to managing the risks within your organisation. Duty holders should be able to show, if asked, how you made decisions and that these were based on sound information.

Pilot and monitor major work design changes

Putting work design and control measures in place changes the way people work. Organisations should test designs and other solutions with a representative group (or groups) to make sure they do what you intended, or if you need to change them further before you roll them out more widely. This piloting stage is also when duty holders can collect useful information on the likely 'real cost' of rolling out the changes. This can help you demonstrate what is or is not reasonably practicable and proportionate to the risk.

Before you authorise any new work designs, and put control measures in place, duty holders must do a final check for residual or new risks. To help you do this check, there is a suggested rating scale and outcomes noted in Table 4. Use it to check the adequacy of your control measures. They must be to at least level 2 and ideally level 1.

Table 4: Rating the Quality of a Control Measure

Adequacy of Work Design and Control Measures	Outcome
1. Work design and control measures are adequate and effective, i.e., hazard or risk is eliminated, or residual risk is managed so far as is reasonably practicable. There is a very low risk of harm.	Monitor and review the risks and controls.
2. Work design and control measures have been considered and put in place, but no better alternatives are currently available or the cost would be grossly disproportionate to the risk. There is a low risk of harm.	Keep reviewing and progressively put more effective options in place.
3. Work design and control measures are inadequate. There is a moderate risk of harm.	Take action as a matter of priority.
4. The psychosocial risk is uncontrolled because work design and control measures have not been put in place or are very inadequate. There is a high risk of harm.	Take action immediately.

Remember that people-based controls, or administrative controls, are vulnerable. These are controls that rely on the skills, knowledge and experience of individuals and teams, including how they interpret your organisation's rules. The reliability of these controls will depend on the degree to which they address the psychosocial risks, whether everyone acts on their new roles and responsibilities to manage these risks, and how skilled and trained the relevant workers are to apply the controls.

Work design, however, does not rely solely on people remembering and following policies and procedures. It is far more likely to be effective and sustainable.

For more information on tools to develop skills in designing work to improve psychosocial risk management see Work Design for Mental Health. The resources were commissioned by the NSW Centre for WHS research.

Conclusions

PCBUs must understand and manage the psychosocial risks in your organisation.

Psychosocial risks are most effectively and sustainably managed through better design of work and systems of work. To do this, PCBUs should make sure all staff making work design decisions:

- Understand the work system and the implications of their decisions on workers' health and safety

- Appropriately consult workers and their representatives

- Coordinate and cooperate with others across the organisation to make sure risks are designed out.

Applying systems thinking to help identify psychosocial hazards and risks, and using work design to manage these, will mean you can control the risk closer to the source. As a result, you can provide the highest level of protection for the largest number of workers. You will also be protecting workers who may, for a range of reasons, be more vulnerable to harm from psychosocial risks.

As well as helping PCBUs understand and manage psychosocial risks, the approach and tools outlined in this guide can support you to comply with duties related to psychosocial hazards and risks under the WHS legislation.

Appendices

Appendix 1. 'Five Why Discovery Process'

The 'Five Whys' is a simple root cause analysis (RCA) technique that may help you understand how psychosocial hazards are interacting and combining to create a risk of harm. It can help duty holders to better understand the sources of psychosocial risk, approaches to the design of work, and systems of work to address the risk.

Step One: Clearly define the scope of the exercise and list each specific problem. The purpose of this is to get the team to focus on the same problem, which makes the process quicker and less confusing.

Step Two: Form a team to look at the problem and for solutions from different perspectives. Make sure you have workers who are experiencing the problem and who have some 'expertise in the area' where possible. It can be helpful to include workers from other areas or sites to get different perspectives. Appoint a trusted and competent person to facilitate the whole process and write down everyone's answers.

Step Three: Organise the data you have about the problem with the help of the work team and clarify what you know about it. Creating a timeline of events that led to the problem emerging/risk can be very helpful. Remember for every risk, action/inaction and adverse behaviour included in the "timeline", ask the question 'what should have been done compared to what was done?'

Step Four: Ask 'why'. Work backwards asking why the problem happened and write the answers down. Ask the 'why' question multiple times to help identify the causes that may have contributed to the risk.

Step Five: Once you have found the root cause(s) and assessed possible solutions, you can plan corrective action(s) or change(s) to help prevent it happening again. Make sure all workers are aware of the outcomes of the discovery process, and that they receive any appropriate training, instruction, and supervision on the changes and any new work methods.

Table 5: Example of using the Five Why Questions

Problem/ situation	The call centre worker did not follow the organisation's process to deal with an upset client, the client complained about how their issue was handled and worker was extremely distressed.
Why	The worker was new to the organisation and did not know what the correct processes were.
Why	Issue was not included in induction. The worker was anxious about asking for help from the supervisor as they were still on probation.
Why	The supervisor was new to the organisation and thought the issue was covered in training. The supervisor was not checking in with workers to see how they were going and if they knew the correct process.
Why	The supervisor was busy learning their own role and had multiple new staff to manage. The supervisor did not know there were client-handling policies and suggestions available on the computer system.
Why	Induction training was generic and did not include this known common issue. This was because workers were not consulted during development of the training. A distressed client-handling policy and instructions were available; however, they were not in an obvious location on the computer system. They had been developed by the previous supervisor and the knowledge had been lost.

Appendix 2. Tips for a psychosocial task hazard analysis

Doing a psychosocial task hazard analysis will help you better understand the systems, essential resources (people, equipment, and information), and main steps you need to follow, in order to complete the task successfully and safely.

Psychosocial Task Hazard Analysis Tips

1. Read SafeWork NSW's Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work and other relevant resources (including information on hazards that may present risks to psychological or physical health and safety in your workplace)

2. Read evidence-based information about common workplace risks and control measures in your type of organisation from reputable sites like WHS regulators, your industry association or relevant trade union. You may also wish to refer to other Australian and international jurisdiction websites

3. Gather your organisation's information and data about position descriptions, Safe Work Method Statements, WHS risk register, near miss incidents, injury and illness data, worker surveys, customer complaints and Health and Safety Committee meetings

   a) Involve your workers and their HSRs throughout the process. Explain why you are doing the task hazard analysis. Make sure you reassure workers the focus is on understanding the psychosocial risks, not on individual workers' performance. Include information about systems thinking to help show this

   b) Explain the task hazard analysis process including how workers can help and how you will keep them informed of the outcomes

4. Prioritise tasks or jobs for analysis. Focus on:

   a) Tasks that are known or suspected to be a high psychosocial risk to workers and which are important parts of a job or role

   b) Tasks you plan to significantly redesign or stemming from new projects

5. Set up an analysis team. Make sure you include both experienced and novice workers; a supervisor/manager; and a HSR or Health and Safety Committee or WHS officer. It can be helpful to include someone from other areas of your workplace to gain alternative perspectives

6. Do the task hazard analysis:

   a) Gather the team together and agree on the processes and team member roles and responsibilities. This includes who is the task hazard analysis owner who is responsible for reporting the issues to senior managers

   b) Observe the task. You may want to break it down into key steps or ask workers to do an 'activity diary' in which they make notes on things that make a particular step easy or hard. You can use this information as prompts in the task hazard analysis discussions

   c) Discuss and document all relevant information including:

      i. The goal or purpose of the task

      ii. Key steps and actions in the task, in sequential order. Make sure you keep the steps in their correct order and that each one logically flows to the next. Keep the language simple when describing actions. Generally, most tasks can be described in 10 steps or less. You may need to break complicated tasks into subtasks

      iii. Essential or very important inputs and resources needed to do the task. These include information, equipment, the context the task is performed in, and people

      iv. Psychosocial hazards associated with the task, and how these might vary over time or due to different levels of staff experience

      v. Control measures that are currently in place and how effective these are

      vi. How the work and systems of work could be redesigned to address the risks.

Workplaces and situations are always changing so any analysis is just at a point in time. It will increase your understanding of some of the current situations and hazards but is unlikely to be comprehensive. Use the information you have gained from the process and include it in your risk register to help you prioritise actions and make sure they get done and are monitored.

Table 6: Task Hazard Analysis Template

Task hazard analysis

Organisation name: Site/location: Date:

Task hazard analysis owner: Task hazard analysis participants:

Job/role that does the task: Task goals: (describe)

Basic task steps (who does what and when):	Significant hazards and potential causes:	Consequences of the hazard:

Actions:	Who will do this:	By when:

Appendix 3. Work Design Case Studies

SafeWork NSW's Code of Practice (pages 28-37) includes ten scenarios illustrating psychosocial risks and work design control measures. Case studies are included in this next section to illustrate organisational and team level work design, and team and task level work design.

Case Study One: Hospitality Sector

Organisational context and work situation

A busy, ageing, regional, local sport organisation has a bar, restaurant and gambling facilities associated with their club. It has extended opening hours, so staff need to do shift work and be able to move between the bar, restaurant, or gaming room depending on how busy each is. There is also a courtesy bus. Most customers on the courtesy bus are elderly and may require help to get on and off the bus.

- The club employs a large number of part time female workers from racially diverse backgrounds
- The club also employs casual workers for special functions who are typically less experienced
- There are frequent staff shortages
- The layout of the bar and restaurant is poor which increases the manual handling risks and slows service
- Inexperienced staff usually take longer to do tasks.

These factors lead to regular customer complaints about bar and restaurant wait times. This is made worse as the poor stock ordering system means some favourite drinks and food frequently run out.

Club staff are expected to help create a friendly welcoming environment. However this is challenging when customers are often rude about wait times, intoxicated and young female staff frequently complain about being threatened and racially harassed. Frequent late roster changes are also creating problems for workers trying to plan childcare and home duties.

While no staff have recently put in a stress claim, the organisation is finding it hard to recruit and retain experienced staff as stressed and dissatisfied workers are easily employed by other clubs and restaurants in the town.

Psychosocial hazards and risks

The club, through their worker consultation forums and exit interviews, identified a range of psychosocial and physical risks leading to staff stress and fatigue. These included: frequent exposure to harassment and aggression from customers, high workloads, emotionally demanding work (being polite to rude customers), low job control, hot working environments in kitchens, hazardous manual handling of kegs and food and drink supplies, unpredictable and inflexible shifts and inadequate training for new staff. They also identified that floor managers felt rushed so didn't always feel they had enough time to give practical and emotional support.

Work design process and control measures to manage psychosocial risks

The house and duty managers began to review daily takings, check online reviews, staff notes on issues that came up during their shifts, and upcoming functions to make sure they rostered enough experienced staff on when needed. Rosters were now published two weeks in advance and staff were encouraged to approach managers if they needed changes.

Instead of fixed roles, all staff were now expected and trained to do multiple roles across the club so they could help out whenever needed. To ensure staff were clear on the new responsibilities, this was included in their job descriptions. Staff suggested it would be helpful to have QR Code stickers (which took staff to an online version of the instructions), or quick reference sheets placed near the task. This was especially important where the task had to be done in a particular order for safety and efficiency reasons, such as tapping the kegs.

Staff said the varied roles made the shifts more interesting and they appreciated learning new skills. While staff were undergoing training some extra staff were needed. As they became confident the extra staff were no longer needed.

The ordering systems were reviewed and updated to make sure appropriate stock was available. Where it was not, floor staff could let customers know.

Most staff worked in teams of two or three and now at the beginning of each shift would meet to discuss how to divide tasks up to share the load. This improved their sense of job control, made work more interesting and junior staff were able to develop new skills.

Staff suggested that courtesy bus customers were more respectful when older rather than younger staff drove. Whenever possible, older staff were rostered on. This also allowed the staff to get to know their regular customers and build relationships. The bus was fitted with a radio in case the driver needed assistance or there was a medical emergency.

The club organised for staff representatives to meet with the architect and discuss the planned staged club refurbishment. This meant staff could help produce ideas to improve the workflow and reduce manual handling risks associated with the kitchen and bar areas. This also identified some quick fixes which were introduced immediately: co-locating ice and glassware; putting in floor mats to reduce leg fatigue; and making sure the heaviest food and drink supplies were in the middle shelves in the cool room and staff moved them using trolleys.

Staff were trained to politely ask customers about any service complaints but reminded and supported to use the club's no abuse tolerance policy. If customers repeated the unacceptable behaviour the duty managers or security staff member escorted them off the premises.

Case Study Two: Retail

Organisational context and work situation

A large regional supermarket chain has typical grocery items but also recently introduced an online sales and delivery service. To manage this, major rostering changes and a new computerised rostering system has been introduced. This new system sets the days and times when tasks need to be done. Staff are now expected to work across multiple store departments in a single shift. Managers make sure hours are equally distributed across available staff and the organisation's roster app now requires staff to respond online with their shift availability.

The new rosters are based on this system with very little flexibility for changes at the local store level. Operating hours have also changed with the store now opening later and closing earlier. Some in-store departments have even more restricted operating hours. Customer self-service terminals have also been introduced.

The time allocations for tasks were recently updated based on the records of average times to complete standard tasks (where this information was available). A time and motion study was done for the new tasks. As a result, the time allowances either remained the same or were reduced. The new allowances have little flexibility and do not consider relevant circumstances, such as trying to do tasks during busy times when the store is crowded, and that customers frequently ask staff for help.

Limited worker consultation occurred about the changes before they were introduced. Staff report they now sometimes do not have enough time to complete tasks safely and well. This has led to stress and higher staff turnover. Supervisors have reported there are not enough experienced staff available to train new workers.

Psychosocial hazards and risks

The supermarket, through their worker consultation forums and meetings with union representatives, identified a range of psychosocial and physical risks that were contributing to stress, fatigue and musculoskeletal risks. Concerns focused on:

- Poor consultation with workers on the rostering and hours of work changes
- Insufficient staff allocated during peak periods
- Staff felt they had little flexibility or say (job control) over which departments they were allocated to and the order in which they could do tasks

- Staff that were doing the new tasks (such as picking stock for online orders) reported there had been inadequate training, making them especially anxious and meaning mistakes occurred more frequently
- Customers often being rude when there were technical problems with the self-service terminals.

Generally, staff reported they felt their supervisors did try to support them but did not have time as they too were often struggling to complete all their tasks. Staff felt store managers were not listening to their concerns.

Staff had significant concerns about the design of the new online order trolleys. These were larger with extra storage crates. While the larger size had reduced the number of 'trips' required, its size made it harder to see around (especially for shorter workers). The trolleys were generally heavier and harder to manoeuvre within aisles especially when the store was crowded.

Staff noted there were only ever a small number of staff rostered on in the alcohol department. Alcohol theft was a constant problem. They reported they were required to ask potentially underage customers for identification and to refuse service to those who were clearly intoxicated. This resulted in frequent abuse and threats of violence by customers.

Staff noted a range of design issues that made it stressful to monitor customers safety. The supermarket was located close to the shopping centre's entrance and there were two entry/exits. The sales counter was narrow which meant customers could easily reach across and take goods from behind the counter. While there was a panic alarm installed, it alerted a contact external to the shopping centre, so response times were slow and there were no safe retreat spots if workers were threatened.

Work design process and control measures to manage psychosocial risks

The store manager heard about the concerns and reviewed the tasks, daily takings and consulted workers about the issues raised. As a result, some tasks have now been rostered for times when the store is less busy. This also helped reduce aisle congestion and customer complaints.

Local site managers have greater flexibility to change staff rostering from the predetermined settings. Managers can put staff in areas which best suit them and take into account workers' skills, interests and personal circumstances. They now allow additional time to complete tasks when the store is busy. Staff have greater controls and can push back some tasks and do these later in the shift when it is not as busy.

Staff are being trained to work across multiple departments, but this is now done more slowly. Workers learn one area at a time and are allowed to master each one before moving to a new task. Training is now done during quieter periods when it is easier to concentrate.

New workers are being given extra time to complete the tasks and paired with an experienced 'buddy'. Workers report they feel better supported and have appreciated the greater job control.

Wherever possible more experienced workers are allocated to the alcohol department. Restocking is now done during quieter periods when there is less likely to be issues with intoxicated customers. During busy times and when there is a risk of customer aggression around refusing alcohol service, workers are required to stay behind the sales register area. This has been redesigned to be lockable with anti-jump wires to give workers a safe retreat place. Counters have been raised and widened with moveable objects (such as a donation jar) removed from the surface so these can't be used as a weapon. All alcohol sales workers are provided with an earpiece connected to the supermarket store security team so they can discreetly call for assistance if needed. A panic alarm directly alerting supermarket and shopping centre security teams has also been provided. Centre security and the local police have increased their patrols around the liquor store and outside the supermarket. CCTV has been upgraded across the store and high price alcohol items placed in reinforced locked cabinets.

To allow for aisle congestion and interruptions from customers, the supermarket has allocated extra time to complete online picking orders, especially when there are customers in store. Workers are rotated through heavier pick aisles to reduce their exposure to manual handling.

The online trolley provider consulted workers about the design concerns. Modifications to the trolleys have reduced the quantity of products that can fit in each crate, reducing the overall weight and force required to move it. Staff use a smaller trolley with better visibility and handling characteristics during the busiest times. Where possible, bulky and heavy items such as dog food and drinks are now 'picked' directly from the truck or into crates when required.

Staff report they feel the workloads, in terms of time pressure and manual handling demands, are now more manageable and the increased job control has increased their ability to manage their fatigue and stress.

Case Study Three: Education

Organisational context and work situation

A morning administrative meeting has been introduced by senior leaders in a school. Workers must attend the meeting in addition to their current work requirements. Workers were not consulted prior to the announcement.

Workers emailed the principal with concerns about the process and additional workload. Workers felt that their workload had grown out of control, was impacting on their health and their family relationships, and the

new imposed additional meeting was the 'last straw'. One worker experienced an escalation in psychological distress and lodged a claim for workers compensation for a psychological injury.

Psychosocial hazards and risks

The principal took immediate action to suspend the proposed new additional meeting so the executive could revisit the suggestion and review the existing meetings workers needed to attend in addition to their teaching duties. A confidential survey was also sent out to all affected staff so that their views could be considered. A range of psychosocial hazards and risks were identified through the review, priorities were:

- Risk of poor organisational change consultation if workers were not involved in design decisions

- High workload

- Low control.

Work design process and control measures to manage psychosocial risks

Following the review, the executive decided the additional morning administration meeting would go ahead beginning in the following term. This would allow staff to make childcare arrangements where necessary. Other meetings that were currently being held once a week would only occur on an as-needs basis, which would be determined by the affected staff.

Overall, the review showed that staff valued the concept of a whole staff weekly administration meeting, that had a clear start and finish time, an agenda circulated in advance, and opportunities for additional items to be raised. Workers said they did not believe they could manage this meeting without other requirements being reduced to fit it in. The principal set that in peak periods no meetings should be held at all, and any urgent administrative matters could be dealt with by email in those weeks.

At the educational department level, while conducting a regular review of incident reports, the People and Culture team noticed a spike in the number of claims for psychological injury. They also noted feedback from workers indicated that too many work hours along with an intensification of work was contributing to too many workers feeling burnt out. This trend was discussed at the senior executive level. The department issued advice to principals that they needed to consult with staff and consider staff members' time when allocating work tasks and setting expectations.

Case Study Four: Policy and research organisation

Organisational context and work situation

A medium sized research organisation that does complex analysis for customers had a command and control management style with highly siloed specialist teams. The research topics and analyses that customers needed were highly varied. However, client requests always came with tight timeframes and significant reputational issues if the advice was inaccurate or late. The organisation had adopted hybrid working arrangements with most staff working some days in the week from home.

The organisation had topic specialist teams which often caused some teams to have too much work whilst other teams had too little. The IT workload system was antiquated and did not allow managers to properly understand project requirements or workloads, especially for complex policy matters. The organisation had poor tools and templates for routine analytic tasks and reports, even though better templates could have reduced team workloads.

Supervisors tried, where they could, to allocate routine tasks to non-specialist teams. However, this work was often boring and also resented by staff as they felt they missed out on developing and using interesting new skills. Staff were reporting stress and frustration around current work designs and systems of work, including role overload. The organisation was unable to rapidly respond to customer requests without putting their staff at risk of harm. The staff, especially managers, were feeling stressed and overwhelmed and knew things had to change. However, they felt a lot of anxiety about a proposed organisational restructure to address the psychosocial and efficiency risks.

Psychosocial hazards and risks

A range of psychosocial risks were identified through the People at Work Survey, from staff consultation workshops and reports by supervisors to the management team meetings.

These included:

- Prolonged periods of excessively high and occasionally low workloads, as work was unequally distributed across the organisation
- Cognitively complex technical tasks with poor practical support due to poor information management systems, templates, cross-team communication and working relationships
- Unrealistic client deadlines
- Lack of tools and templates such as generic analytic models and template reports

- Inadequate skill development opportunities
- Risk of poor organisational change consultation if workers were not involved in design decisions.

Work design process and control measures to manage psychosocial risks

The organisation did a series of task analyses, used a workload planning tool to analyse workloads, and did a skills audit to better understand the organisation's current needs and staff skills mix. Leaders used a participatory approach to design solutions, forming a working group made up of worker representatives and the management team.

Leaders put in place an organisational restructure. The new structure set up six work groups in which all members had basic generic analytic and reporting skills training. Each group also had at least one technical subject matter expert. This meant all groups could now do most tasks. Where additional technical advice was needed, the divisional manager would request the relevant expert from another team to join meetings to give specialist advice.

The organisation recognised that rather than outsourcing the development of a new IT workload system, analytical tools, and reporting templates, these should be developed internally and with staff input. External providers were unlikely to understand the nuances of the work tasks. An internal working group was set up and developed the new systems. The group advised the human resources team on how training for these should be rolled out to all staff.

The new IT system also allowed the leadership team and manager to monitor customer requests, workloads, staff leave, and so on. Leaders could flexibly allocate tasks to the teams that had the most capacity.

Project managers now held regular planning meetings with key staff and customers to make sure everyone had a clear understanding of the job scope, risks, and realistic delivery timetables.

The new IT system included collaborative workspace tools that allowed staff working from different locations to share data and run through analytical models on screen in team meetings.

All staff members received training and support to do general analytics work and reporting on tasks. Leaders used the skills audit to find out individual worker's needs so training and support could be, so far as possible, individually tailored to them.

The changes were piloted, and results showed that, for most staff, while the workload peaks and troughs evened out, managers' workloads had increased.

Managers needed to change their leadership style to give practical and emotional support and guidance. This meant shifting to an inspirational mentoring role rather than the previous command and control model, which for some had been a struggle. The managers also needed to rapidly become skilled in the new workload management software so they could closely monitor task allocations. The pilot showed that the organisation needed more time to update the policies and procedures, including performance agreements. The senior leadership team acknowledged this and put in place bi-weekly meetings with all managers to give them greater emotional and practical support (such as helping prioritise tasks and delaying deliverables). The leadership team recognised managers' flexibility and professionalism as they moved to different leadership styles and rewarded their long working hours and efforts with paid time off.

Senior leaders recognised the changes being made to the organisation's design and culture were significant. As the new arrangements were being rolled out, they made clear staff should expect mistakes but know they offered valuable opportunities to learn and change the work designs. Leaders made sure there was a culture where all members of the organisation could give feedback on elements of the design that were effective or may need further improvements.

Two years after the rollout, staff report workload peaks and troughs are more even; there are greater opportunities to use and develop skills; and they believe their organisation has an innovative learning culture and practices. Generally, stress is lower and staff satisfaction higher. Customer feedback shows the advice given by the organisation is of high quality and timely.

Appendix 4. When a SafeWork Inspector Calls or Visits

If a SafeWork NSW Inspector visits or calls, they will be checking that the PCBU and officers are meeting their duties to effectively manage psychosocial hazards and risks. While a SafeWork NSW Inspector will make inquiries, or conduct an investigation, based on the available information and work issues that have been raised, a SafeWork NSW Inspector may consider whether the PCBU and officers are carrying out the following:

1. Managing psychosocial risks and hazards in accordance with legislative obligations

2. Have effective systems in place to identify and assess psychosocial risk and hazards

3. Have taken, or are actively taking, all reasonable steps to design out hazards and risks at the source to eliminate or minimise psychosocial hazards and risks

4. Monitoring the effectiveness of work design and other control measures and, where required, improves the work design

5. Consulting affected workers, and

6. Consulting, coordinating and cooperating with other duty holders.

SafeWork NSW has prepared a Work Design Checklist to assist a PCBU and Officer to consider the information that may be required by the SafeWork NSW Inspector. However, this Work Design Checklist is for guidance purposes only. Importantly, a SafeWork NSW Inspector may ask a question, or request information, that is not included in the Work Design Checklist below.

Table 7. Work Design Checklist

PCBU and officers' work design checklist			
If asked by a SafeWork NSW Inspector, can you explain and if required, provide evidence that:	**Yes**	**Not sure**	**No**
You know what the serious psychological and physical hazards are for the different teams in your organisation			
You understand why/how psychosocial hazards might cause harm either by themselves or in combination			
You know which workers and other persons may be at most risk and why			
You have consulted with affected workers			
You use effective and systematic processes to review relevant data and information to identify and monitor key psychosocial hazards and risks and decide on actions			
You can explain how the organisation identified/investigated system level issues that create psychosocial hazards and then used work design to address psychosocial risks			
You know what control measures are used in your workplace and how well (or not) they are working			
You can show that you have designed or redesigned work to eliminate and minimise psychosocial risks SFARP (so far as reasonably practicable)			

Notes: If you answered 'not sure' or 'no,' take immediate steps to address the issue so if a SafeWork NSW Inspector visits you can show you are serious about meeting your WHS duties and serious about improving the risk controls in your organisation.

Evidence you could show an Inspector may include organisational records and statements from managers and affected workers and HSRs. The SafeWork NSW Inspector may ask to see copies of relevant records and to speak privately with workers and managers.

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