

Welcome to the fourth edition of WorkSafe ACT's Health and Safety Representative Network Newsletter

In this edition, we look at how Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and Health and Safety Committees (HSCs) perform different but complementary functions. We also look at:

- + our upcoming HSR networking event
- + recent WorkSafe ACT developments
- + preparing for National Safe Work Month, and
- + HSR information and resources.

Thank you to HSRs across the ACT who continue to represent workers and contribute to healthier and safer workplaces.

Missed a previous edition?

You can find all earlier HSR newsletters, along with other useful information, on WorkSafe ACT's [Health and safety representatives and committees webpage](#).

Upcoming HSR networking event

Connect with other ACT HSRs

WorkSafe ACT is hosting an afternoon networking event for HSRs – it would be great to see you there!

- + Date: Thursday, 27 August 2026
- + Time: 2:00pm to 4:00pm (afternoon tea provided)
- + Location: Innovation Centre, Level 2, Nara Centre, 3 Constitution Avenue, Canberra
- + Registration: Please [register here](#) by 24 August 2026

The event will give you an opportunity to meet other HSRs, speak with WorkSafe ACT staff and ask any questions you may have, plus share general experiences about representing workers and contributing to workplace health and safety.

The ACT Work Health and Safety Commissioner, Jacqueline Agius, will welcome attendees and discuss the important role HSRs play in ACT workplaces.



HSRs and Health and Safety Committees: Different roles, shared goal

If your workplace already has an HSR, what does a Health and Safety Committee (HSC) add?

HSRs and HSCs both help workers have a voice in work health and safety. They perform different functions, but they are working towards the same goal - supporting consultation, cooperation and healthier and safer workplaces.



What does an HSR do?

An HSR is elected by members of a work group to represent their health and safety interests. HSRs can speak with workers about their concerns, represent their work group in health and safety matters, investigate complaints and raise concerns with the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU). They can also monitor measures taken by the PCBU to comply with the work health and safety (WHS) legislation in relation to their work group.

An HSR generally exercises their powers and functions in relation to the work group they represent. This provides workers with a direct voice when decisions may affect their health and safety. HSRs are not responsible for managing workplace risks or fixing health and safety issues. Their role is to represent workers and help make sure workers' views are heard and considered.

What does an HSC do?

If requested by an HSR for a work group carrying out work at the workplace, or by five or more workers at the workplace, the PCBU must establish an HSC within two months. A PCBU may also establish an HSC on its own initiative.

An HSC provides dedicated time for regular and structured cooperation. Its functions include facilitating cooperation between the PCBU and workers on measures designed to ensure workers' health and safety, and assisting with the development of workplace health and safety standards, rules and procedures.

An HSC must meet at least once every three months and at any reasonable time requested by at least half of its members. At least half of the committee members must be workers who were not nominated by the PCBU. If there is one HSR at the workplace, that HSR is automatically a committee member,

however they may choose not to be. If there is more than one HSR, the HSRs can choose one or more HSRs to participate.

An HSC does not replace direct consultation with workers or their HSRs, or transfer responsibility for managing health and safety risks to the committee (PCBUs and other duty holders retain their duties under the WHS legislation).



The key differences between HSRs and HSCs:

An HSR



- + is elected by members of a work group
- + represents the health and safety interests of that work group
- + investigates complaints and raises workers' concerns with the PCBU, and
- + provides workers with a direct voice in consultation.

An HSC

- + brings worker and PCBU representatives together
- + may consider matters affecting different work groups or the wider workplace
- + assists with developing workplace health and safety standards, rules and procedures, and
- + provides a forum for regular and structured cooperation.



How do HSRs and HSCs work together?

An HSR can bring the experiences and views of their work group to the HSC. The committee can then consider whether the matter affects other workers or requires a broader workplace response. After the committee meets, the HSR can report back to their work group about what was discussed and any agreed next steps.

In this way, the HSR provides a voice for their work group, while the HSC provides a forum for cooperation on broader workplace health and safety matters.

For more information, visit the [Health and safety representatives and committees](#) webpage.

What's new

Safety processes must be followed, not just documented

Having safety systems and procedures in place is important, but documents alone do not control workplace risks.

WorkSafe ACT recently reminded duty holders that safety procedures must be understood, applied and maintained in practice. Workplaces should regularly check how work is being performed, make sure workers understand the required controls and act when unsafe practices are identified. Workers may also identify that a documented procedure does not reflect the way a task is actually performed or is difficult to follow in practice.

As an HSR, you can speak with your work group about whether:

- + procedures reflect the work being performed
- + the required controls are available and practical
- + workers understand how to perform the work safely
- + time pressures or working conditions are affecting compliance, and
- + workers have been consulted about proposed changes.

PCBUs and other duty holders remain responsible for ensuring that appropriate control measures are implemented and maintained.

For more information:

[Safety processes must be followed, not just documented.](#)

Reminder: Updated incident notification guidance

Changes to incident notification requirements under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* commenced on 19 November 2025. WorkSafe ACT has updated its guidance and incident notification form to explain the requirements.

The guidance clarifies the types of serious injuries, illnesses and dangerous incidents that must be notified to WorkSafe ACT. It also provides information about preserving incident sites and responsibilities at shared workplaces.

HSRs should be familiar with their workplace's incident reporting arrangements and know who to contact when a serious incident occurs - noting that the duty to notify WorkSafe ACT rests with the PCBU or PCBUs to which the notification requirement applies. It does not rest with the HSR. Reporting an incident through an internal workplace system does not replace notification to WorkSafe ACT when the legal notification threshold is met.

For more information:

[Incident Notification amendments](#)

National Safe Work Month 2026

National Safe Work Month is held every October and encourages workplaces across Australia to focus on safe and healthy work.

WorkSafe ACT will be promoting material throughout the month and hosting a safety BBQ at Bunnings to raise awareness of safety in the community. More details will be posted on our website in the near future – so watch this space!

How can HSRs get involved?

HSRs can help their workplaces prepare by asking workers which health and safety matters are important to them.

You could:

- + share campaign materials with your work group and PCBU
- + raise National Safe Work Month at an upcoming HSC or work group meeting, and
- + organise a safety discussion or event at your workplace.

When planning activities, consider how all workers can participate, including shift workers, part-time and casual workers, labour-hire workers, contractors and people working remotely.



Keep up to date

WorkSafe ACT publishes safety alerts and advice about workplace incidents, identified hazards, legislative changes and emerging WHS issues.

If you haven't already done so, you can [subscribe to alerts here](#).

You can also check out our [Safety Spotlight podcast](#), and connect with us on [social media here](#).