



Guideline

Work Health and Safety (WHS) and Wellbeing Guideline

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1. Purpose and Authority

The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) is committed to working with parliamentarians and workers to promote a safe and healthy working environment within Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces (CPWs). This commitment is underpinned by the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act) which applies a duty on the PWSS, the Department of Finance, parliamentarians and workers to ensure health, safety and wellbeing while at work.

The PWSS and the Department of Finance, on behalf of the Commonwealth, have the duties of a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) in relation to work undertaken at a parliamentarian's electorate office(s) and work undertaken by workers for a parliamentarian at other locations. It is important to note there may be overlapping PCBU's in some parliamentary workplaces. For example, the Department of Parliamentary Services also shares PCBU responsibilities for employees who work at Parliament House.

This guideline is designed to explain the roles and responsibilities of the PWSS, parliamentarians and workers in relation to health, safety and wellbeing, and is part of a wholistic program to monitor and address WHS hazards and risks. For the purposes of this guideline, a worker is anyone who works in any capacity for a parliamentarian. This may include:

- employees engaged under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act)
- contractors or subcontractors
- an employee of a contractor
- labour hire contractors
- outworkers
- apprentices or trainees
- work experience students
- volunteers.

An Officer is a *'person who makes or participates in making decisions that affect the whole or substantial part of the business or undertaking of the Commonwealth'*. Under the WHS Act, parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees who are authorised persons are considered Officers.

2. Key Principles

This guideline is based on the principles that:

- workplace safety is everyone's responsibility
- all WHS incidents, hazards and near misses are to be reported promptly
- managers need to proactively manage WHS hazards and risks
- workers are consulted and risk controls are implemented early.

3. Expectations and Responsibilities

3.1 Mutual

- Everyone has a responsibility to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and to ensure that their actions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others in the workplace.

3.2 Workers

Employees have the responsibility to:

- comply with their obligations under the WHS Act, which includes following reasonable instructions and ensuring they don't affect the health and safety of others
- demonstrate a willingness to be actively involved in activities and programs designed to improve physical and psychological health and safety in the workplace
- cease or refuse to carry out work if there is a reasonable concern that the work poses a serious risk to their health and safety.

3.3 Parliamentarians and authorised officers

Parliamentarians and authorised persons are considered Officers under the WHS Act and must exercise due diligence to ensure WHS obligations are met. Strong leadership plays a crucial role in creating safe and healthy workplaces that maximises health, safety and wellbeing. Parliamentarians and authorised officers have responsibility for:

- ensuring that all [notifiable incidents](#) are reported to the PWSS and Comcare. An incident is notifiable if it results in the death of a person, serious injury or illness of a person, or it is a [dangerous incident](#).
- minimising risks in the workplace so far as is reasonably practicable.
- ensuring the health and safety of workers while they are at work.
- developing a workplace culture that aims to prevent injury, supports employees and promotes wellbeing.
- ensuring that all office locations have suitable safe work systems in place.
- actively monitoring and evaluating WHS management in the offices using available resources.

3.4 Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS)

Under the WHS Act, the PWSS has shared PCBU responsibilities with the Department of Finance to ensure the health and safety of workers and others at the workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.

To achieve this, the PWSS will:

- provide advice and guidance to MOP(S) Act employees and parliamentarians regarding workers' compensation claims, rehabilitation and early intervention support.
- develop, implement and evaluate policies, programs and initiatives to prevent, or minimise so far as reasonably practicable, harm to workers.
- consult with parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees with regards to WHS policies and arrangements.
- consult and coordinate arrangements with other responsible agencies and duty holders, where appropriate.
- provide a range of psychological health and wellbeing support services, including an employee assistance program, critical incident debriefing, training and conflict resolution services (see section 4).

4. WHS and Wellbeing supports

4.1 WHS Toolkit

The WHS toolkit is the WHS Management System for Electorate Offices and provides step by step guidance on managing WHS, including information on your key WHS obligations and duties and how to meet them. There is advice on how to identify and manage WHS hazards, ensuring that everyone has the knowledge that they need to work safely and how to report workplace incidents and hazards.

Further information can be found in the [PWSS WHS Toolkit](#).

4.2 Early Intervention

Early intervention is about acting early to minimise the impact and duration of emerging symptoms of workplace injury and helps employees access early and appropriate treatment and support. Benefits of early intervention include improved recovery outcomes, increased capacity to remain at work, reduced length of time away from work and reduced likelihood of further absence due to sickness.

Early intervention is important for both physical and psychological health conditions and can include access to treatment, ergonomic assessments, allied health services and a range of other services.

Further information can be found in the [PWSS Early Intervention Policy](#).

4.3 Workplace Adjustments

A workplace adjustment is a change to a work process, practice, procedure or environment that enables an employee to perform their job and minimises the impact of their disability, illness or injury. The requirement for the workplace adjustment may be short-term, temporary or ongoing.

Further information can be found in the [Workplace Adjustment Policy](#).

4.4 Fitness for Duty

The PWSS provides advice, support and guidance to parliamentarians and employees on matters relating to fitness for duty. This includes ensuring that employees who are ill or injured are fit for normal duty and appropriate mechanisms are in place to facilitate the employee's return to work.

Where a parliamentarian has concerns about an employee's fitness for duty, the parliamentarian may require the employee to undergo an Independent Medical Examination (IME). An IME is conducted by an independent medical assessor who has the appropriate qualifications, skills and experience to provide recommendations on the employee's health condition/s and fitness for duty. The purpose of the IME is to provide parliamentarians information about an employee's health and fitness for duty, and to provide guidance on workplace adjustments that may be needed to support the employee to undertake the inherent requirements of their role.

4.5 Fatigue management

The PWSS supports parliamentarians and authorised officers to identify risks to health and safety from fatigue and implement mitigations so that these risks are eliminated if possible or minimised as far as is reasonably practicable. The PWSS also delivers training to support parliamentarians and their employees to implement strategies to reduce the risk of fatigue; and enables parliamentarians and their employees to access counselling and support to develop individual strategies to manage fatigue.

Further information can be found in the [Fatigue Management Policy](#).

4.6 Work design

The design of work affects the way workers feel and can influence motivation, engagement and stress levels at work. Good work design protects workers from harm to their health and safety and can improve worker health and wellbeing. In contrast, poor work design is a key psychosocial hazard in the workplace.

When designing work for new and existing employees, it is important to take into consideration:

- the work (how it is performed, the context, workload and the systems of work)
- the working environment (the physical workplace and the materials used in the workplace)
- the workers (their skills, needs and training).

Consider the extent to which a person has:

- stimulating work which requires use of a variety of skills, performing a variety of tasks and problem-solving demands.
- mastery at work, from having role clarity, getting feedback on performance, and taking a task from beginning to end.

- agency and having a sense of autonomy and control over how work is scheduled, the methods used to achieve goals and making judgements and decisions.
- relational work which is important for feeling supported at work and connecting to others and to the purpose of their work.
- tolerable work demands which feel sustainable, particularly for time pressure, emotional demands and role conflict.

Before amending or changing an employee's job role, it is important to consult with the employee to determine how the role is currently impacting on them and create a way forward.

The PWSS HR Advice team can assist parliamentarians in considering work design to improve the health and wellbeing of their workers. HR Advice can be contacted via phone at 1800 747 977 (option 1) or via email at hr@pwss.gov.au.

4.7 WHS training

The PWSS offers a range of WHS training through the [PWSS Academy](#) to ensure parliamentarians and employees are aware of their responsibilities under the WHS legislation. Training options are available specific to roles such as officers, managers, employees and WHS nominated roles. Training can also be accessed by topic such as workplace behaviours, office safety and working remotely. Specific training needs can be discussed with the PWSS Academy team via phone 1800 747 977 (option 4) or via email at training@pwss.gov.au.

4.8 Safe and respectful workplaces

The [Behaviour Codes and Standards](#) recognise that parliamentarians and staff have a shared responsibility to ensure that Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces meet the highest standards of integrity, dignity safety and respect. A range of policies and guidelines are available to provide further information on appropriate behaviours:

- The [PWSS Preventing and Responding to Unlawful Conduct Policy](#) ensures participants understand what unlawful conduct is and the standards of behaviour expected of them, their legal rights and responsibilities in relation to unlawful conduct, and how to address and respond to unlawful conduct in the workplace.
- The draft [PWSS Impairment from Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy](#) sets out the responsibilities of participants, and the standard of behaviour that is expected of them in relation to the use of alcohol and other drugs in CPW's and while participants are at work in the provision of support for the functioning of Parliament.

4.9 Flu vaccination program

The PWSS offers an annual influenza (flu) vaccination program for all MOP(S) Act employees. Participation in the program is optional and the decision to be vaccinated rests with each employee. Further information is available on the [PWSS website](#).

4.10 Lactation and breastfeeding support

In accordance with Section 69 of the [Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2024-27](#) (the Enterprise Agreement), reasonable paid time during work hours will be provided for lactation breaks for breastfeeding, expressing milk and other associated activities. The PWSS can provide assistance to parliamentarians and employees in the circumstances where an employee requires a flexible working arrangement to support lactation. For advice on flexible working arrangements, the HR Advice team can be contacted via phone at 1800 747 977 (option 1) or via email at hr@pwss.gov.au.

5. Reporting incidents and hazards

Work-related incidents are those that occur whilst undertaking duties connected to employment and include:

- injuries requiring first aid or medical treatment
- near misses such as incidents that may have resulted in injury if not for a mitigating action or system
- incidents requiring time off work
- psychological injury
- decreased capacity to perform normal duties, including where the initial cause was not connected with work.

It may be appropriate to report an incident that occurred outside of work if the incident is likely to affect an employee's capacity to perform work.

Hazards include:

- ergonomic hazards – physical factors in the environment that may cause musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. equipment layout, manual handling, lighting, noise, workstation design etc.)
- physical hazards - factors or conditions within the environment that can harm your health (e.g. electricity, heat, confined spaces, body stressing etc.)
- psychosocial hazards – aspects of work which have the potential to cause psychological or physical harm (e.g. bullying and harassment, workplace violence, mental stress etc.)
- biological hazards – organic substances that present a threat to the health of people and other living organisms (e.g. mould, viruses, toxins from biological sources etc.)
- chemical hazards – a hazardous chemical can be a solid, liquid or gas and harm the health of a person exposed to it (e.g. skin irritants, solvents etc.).

On identifying a hazard, an employee should:

- eliminate the hazard if safe to do so (e.g. clean up spilled water on floor)

- warn colleagues to reduce the risk of injury
- advise the WHS Site Officer who will assess whether an immediate local response is required (e.g. limiting access to the area)

All work-related incidents and hazards must be reported by either calling 1800 747 977 (option 3) or emailing WHS@pwss.gov.au.

6. Reasonably practicable

Reasonably practicable is the standard used to determine if enough was done to minimise hazards, weighing the likelihood of harm against the cost and feasibility of control measures.

There are two elements to what is reasonably practicable. A parliamentarian must first consider what can be done. They must then consider whether it is reasonable in the circumstances to do all that is possible.

Deciding what is ‘reasonably practicable’ to protect people from harm requires taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters, including:

- the likelihood of the hazard or risk concerned occurring
- the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or risk
- knowledge about the hazard or risk, and ways of eliminating or minimising the risk
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, and
- after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

A parliamentarian should consult with employees to better understand the hazard and the risk that it poses as well as seeking input on possible mitigation. The [PWSS WHS team](#) are also available to provide advice on completing a WHS risk assessment (template WHS risk registers are available in the [Manager’s Toolkit](#)) and determining what is reasonably practicable.

7. Consultation

The WHS Committee facilitates consultation between PWSS, Department of Finance, and MOP(S) Act employees on a broad range of work health and safety issues, including developing work health and safety policies.

The committee is made up of Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) from each workgroup comprising of MOP(S) Act employees. The committee also includes union and management representatives. Further information on HSRs and workgroups is available on the [PWSS website](#) and through the [PWSS Academy](#).

8. Nominated work health and safety roles

There are four WHS roles within each parliamentarian's Commonwealth-funded office which assist parliamentarians, MOP(S) Act employees, the PWSS and Department of Finance to meet their duties under the WHS Act. A Corporate Responsibility Allowance will apply to WHS Site officer, First Aid Officer and Emergency Officer roles in accordance with the [Enterprise Agreement](#). General responsibilities are outlined below, noting variances may apply depending on the nature of the office in which they work. Training is provided for all roles.

8.1 WHS Site Officer

The WHS Site Officer provides and coordinates certain WHS tasks at their site(s) of employment, performing essential functions that cannot be conducted off-site or remotely. Further information can be found in the [WHS Site Officer Roles and Responsibilities factsheet](#).

8.2 First Aid Officer

A First Aid Officer is responsible for monitoring and maintaining first aid facilities in their office, administering first aid and assisting the WHS Site Officer (where the WHS Site Officer is not also the First Aid Officer), in monitoring and reporting WHS risks and incidents.

Parliamentarians are required to nominate a First Aid Officer for each electorate, Ministerial and capital city office located outside Parliament House. Parliamentarians are not required to nominate a First Aid Officer for their office in Parliament House as there are existing First Aid arrangements in place. Further information can be found in the [First Aid Officer Roles and Responsibilities factsheet](#).

8.3 Emergency Officer

An Emergency Officer provides information on emergency management and coordinates emergency responses at their site of employment, performing essential functions that cannot be conducted off-site or remotely. This includes facilitating emergency evacuations of their office as necessary, inducting new employees and volunteers on emergency procedures, assisting the WHS Site Officer (where the WHS Site Officer is not also the Emergency Officer) and promoting good WHS practice within the office. Further information can be found in the [Emergency Officer and Deputy Emergency Officer Roles and Responsibilities factsheet](#).

8.4 Deputy Emergency officer

A Deputy Emergency Officer is required to facilitate a smooth transition should the Emergency Officer cease their role. Further information can be found in the [Emergency Officer and Deputy Emergency Officer Roles and Responsibilities factsheet](#).

9. Support

9.1 PWSS

The PWSS is available to provide a range of human resource and work health and safety support and guidance to parliamentarians and employees. We also provide wellbeing support, conflict resolution and early intervention to all employees.

The PWSS can also be contacted via phone 24/7 on 1800 747 977, by SMS on 0487 112 755, email at support@PWSS.gov.au, or in person at M2.105 in APH from 8.30am-7:00pm sitting days or 9.00am-5:00pm all other business days. Visit pwss.gov.au for more information.

9.2 Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a professional and confidential program which aims to enhance the emotional, mental and general psychological wellbeing of employees and their immediate family and household members.

The EAP can be contacted 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Employees, their families and household members can access EAP services for work or personal issues, by calling 1300 360 364 or visit one.telushealth.com | **Username:** pwss | **Password:** Wellbeing

9.3 Before Blue

Parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees have access to Before Blue, an early intervention mental health program which provides tools and support to manage stress, build resilience, and enhance overall mental wellbeing. This service was developed by Beyond Blue in partnership with Comcare.

The service can be accessed without a GP referral or mental health treatment plan. Neither the PWSS nor your employing parliamentarian receive any identifying information about employees who access the service. You can access the service either through the [website](#) or [app](#). Select 'Sign up now' and use the registration code: **PWSS-B4B**.

10. Definitions

Term	Definition
Authorised Persons	A person who has been authorised by a parliamentarian to exercise duties on their behalf.
Commonwealth parliamentary workplace (CPW)	A CPW includes any workplace where parliamentary work occurs, such as Australian Parliament House and parliamentary precincts, ministerial, parliamentary and electorate offices, Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices, home offices. This includes when that work may be remote from a CPW (for example, at external meetings/events or whilst travelling for work purposes).

Term	Definition
Employee	Employees are staff employed under the <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984</i> (Cth). MOP(S) Act employees are employed by parliamentarians on behalf of the Commonwealth.
Notifiable incident	An incident is notifiable if it results from the conduct of a business or undertaking and causes the death of a person, serious injury or illness of a person, or a dangerous incident.
Officer	An Officer is someone who: • makes, or participates in making, significant decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the business, or • has the capacity to significantly affect the business' financial standing.
Parliamentarian	This term refers collectively to Members of the House of Representatives and Senators.
Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)	A PCBU has a primary duty to ensure the health and safety of workers while they are at work in the business or undertaking and others who may be affected by the carrying out of work. Whether a person conducts a business or undertaking is a fact to be determined in each case. Usually: • a business is conducted with a view to make profit and will have some organisation, system and continuity. • an undertaking will have some organisation, systems, and possible continuity, but are usually not profit-making or commercial. PCBUs within the scope of the WHS Act include the Commonwealth, Commonwealth public authorities and certain corporations that are licensed for self-insurance under the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRC Act).
PWSS	Parliamentary Workplace Support Service
Worker	A worker is anyone who works in any capacity for a parliamentarian. This may include: • employees engaged under the <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984</i> (MOP(S) Act) • contractors or subcontractors • an employee of a contractor • labour hire contractors

Term	Definition
	• outworkers • apprentices or trainees • work experience students • volunteers.

11. Useful Resources

Legislation	Policies and Guidelines
• Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 • Parliamentary Workplace Support Service Act 2023 • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 • Privacy Act 1988 • Fair Work Act 2009	• Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2024-27 • Early Intervention Policy • Fatigue Management Policy • Wellbeing Strategies factsheet • WHS Psychosocial Hazards • Workplace Inspection Checklist and Action Plan • WHS Incident Investigation template

12. Document Control

Version Control	
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Review	This document will be reviewed every two years or when a business requirement to do so is identified.