



Fact Sheet

Navigating Change in the Workplace

Bill has worked in a Commonwealth Parliamentary workplace for the past 5 years. Following a recent recruitment exercise, Bill has a new Chief of Staff (CoS).

Bill has noticed that the CoS has different ideas and is making changes to how work is performed. He is struggling to deliver what his new CoS wants and doesn't understand why these changes are required. Bill is worried about what other changes may be coming and what impact they might have on his career.

Concerned about his future, Bill contacts the PWSS to explore strategies to navigate these changes. Bill seeks assistance to prepare for a conversation with his CoS so that he can talk through his concerns and seek clarity on how he can support the changes and achieve the CoS' expectations.

What is workplace change?

Workplace change can be difficult and can take many forms. It includes changes to functions, operations, personnel or strategy. Office restructures, staffing changes, changes in roles/responsibilities, ministry reshuffles and elections are all common changes in Commonwealth Parliamentary workplaces. These changes may be motivated by a need to adapt to external factors or a vision for improvement. It is important to note that change can impact our wellbeing, regardless of its source, how large it may seem or if it is a positive change.

Why is it important to address?

Change can be positive, create opportunities and promote growth however it can also generate uncertainty and anxiety.

A person's reaction to changes in the workplace may vary over time as they make sense of the how the changes will impact them and their colleagues. Recognising these changes can help us to respond appropriately.

It is important to support each other through change to reduce risks such as lack of role clarity, low sense of job control and increased workload. These factors can increase the risks of psychosocial hazards and cause harm in the work environment.

Change management essentials

Engage with the process

- Participate in the change process where possible. This can promote a sense of control, self-efficacy and support. This can include attending meetings/briefings and reviewing correspondence.
- Seek to have open conversations about the meaning and impact of the change with your manager or parliamentary.

Inform yourself

- If left to wander, our minds often ‘fill in the blanks’ with ‘what ifs’ and can inaccurately predict negative outcomes. Seek early, regular and consistent communication from managers/supervisors to prevent negative assumptions.
- Seek to understand the reasoning behind decisions. Ask questions, with an approach of curiosity. This can assist us to understand other perspectives, priorities and move to place of acceptance.

Ask questions

- Clarify your current priorities, roles and responsibilities with your manager to reduce uncertainty and potential points of tension with your supervisor, team members and other teams.
- Support team cohesion by promoting an understanding of interdependencies and how each team contributes to the broader goals.

Get support

Change can be difficult, and everyone responds differently to change. Be alert to the signs that you or a colleague may need additional support. It can be helpful to discuss how you feel about the change and acknowledge the impact it’s having on you and your colleagues. You can use your usual social and work supports, or the following support services:

- Contacting the PWSS Counselling and Support team on 1800 747 977 who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Contacting your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider by phoning 1300 360 364 or online.


Additional resources

PWSS Factsheet: Managing Stress and Anxiety

This working Life podcast Uncertainty at work stressing you out? Here’s how to deal with it - ABC listen

TED Talks:

- How Adaptability Will Help You Deal With Change | Jennifer Jones | TEDxNantwich
- Why Change Is So Scary — and How to Unlock Its Potential | Maya Shankar | TED
- TEDxPerth - Jason Clarke - Embracing Change

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