OH&S HELP



RESEARCH SUMMARY · FEBRUARY 2020

OH&S HELP

What health & safety reps and union organisers told us about keeping workplaces safe.

19 INTERVIEWS · VICTORIA

RESEARCH INTENT

THE FIRST ROUND OF INTERVIEWS SET OUT TO LEARN FROM WORKERS IN THE FIELD

01

Finding & sharing information

How union organisers and HSRs find and distribute OH&S information.

02

The incident process

What HSRs do before, during and after an incident report is lodged.

03

Life in the role

Overall engagement and experiences in their roles.

PART ONE

HEALTH & SAFETY REPS

HSRs across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, from manufacturing floors to classrooms and correctional facilities.

13

REPS INTERVIEWED

HSRS · WHO WE SPOKE TO

13 REPS, FIVE INDUSTRIES, SIX UNIONS

MAKEUP

10 male 3 female

YEARS AS AN HSR



LOCATION

- Metro Melbourne
- Bendigo
- Shepparton
- Eastern Victoria

INDUSTRIES

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Healthcare
- Education
- Correctional services

UNIONS

- AWU
- UWU
- AEU
- ANMF
- HSU
- CPSU

HSRS · ENGAGEMENT

CHALLENGES

Getting support from management

Giving workmates the confidence to speak up on safety

Being made a target, or career repercussions

HSRS · ENGAGEMENT

REWARDS

Visibly seeing improvements

A safer and happier work group

GOOGLE IS THE FIRST STOP FOR SAFETY ANSWERS

7/13

HSRs named Google as their most common way to source information.

Other sources

The WorkSafe website, and official documents such as the Act, the regulations and department guidelines.

Asked in person

Every HSR is approached for safety info, usually verbally. The most involved get calls and messages out of hours. Follow-ups always happen face to face.

HSRS · DEALING WITH HAZARDS

A PIN IS ALWAYS THE LAST RESORT

6/13

have served a PIN

Every HSR goes out of their way to fix problems before it gets to that stage.

13/13

spotted issues on the ground

All HSRs noticed hazards themselves or were alerted by word of mouth.

Monthly

safety meetings

Nearly all had one. Safer workplaces used them to review issues and follow them up.

HSRS · LOGGING ISSUES

PAPER LISTS STILL DO THE HEAVY LIFTING

Printed minutes

Sharing safety meeting minutes via printout was common.

Lists ranked by severity

Every HSR kept a list of issues, usually ranked by seriousness to decide what to tackle first.

2 of 7

had an official digital system

Only one of those was used effectively.

A RECURRING IDEA

HSRS WANT A TOOL FOR HOUSEKEEPING, PROCESS AND A STEPPED APPROACH TO ISSUES

- Send photos of issues to management
- The same system across all sites
- An app for risk assessments and housekeeping audits
- Regular walk-arounds
- Educating other workers
- Reviewing procedures to improve them

HSRS · WHITE COLLAR VS BLUE COLLAR

THE HAZARDS DIFFER. NOT MUCH ELSE DOES.

WHITE COLLAR

- Occupational violence & aggression
- Fatigue & workload
- Stress

BLUE COLLAR

- Environmental hazards
- Physical hazards

Apart from the nature of hazards, every other question was answered in a similar way.

HSRS · SEGMENTS

TWO MAIN HSR GROUPS

GROUP A

WITH A WORKING SYSTEM TO LOG ISSUES

Endorsed logging systems tended to sit in white collar workplaces, though some blue collar sites had them too.

GROUP B

WITHOUT A WORKING SYSTEM TO LOG ISSUES

These tended to be smaller workplaces or more blue collar environments.

PART TWO

UNION ORGANISERS

Organisers from three unions across manufacturing, construction, healthcare and education.

6

ORGANISERS INTERVIEWED

ORGANISERS · WHO WE SPOKE TO

6 ORGANISERS, FOUR INDUSTRIES, THREE UNIONS

MAKEUP

3 male 3 female

YEARS AS AN ORGANISER



LOCATION

- Metro Melbourne
- Bendigo
- Eastern Victoria

INDUSTRIES

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Healthcare
- Education

UNIONS

- AWU
- AEU
- ANMF

ORGANISERS · ENGAGEMENT

CHALLENGES

Getting people to push back in the face of adversity

A narrow view of OH&S — it's psychological, not just physical

Changing minds about why OH&S matters

After every win, there's always more to do

ORGANISERS · ENGAGEMENT

REWARDS

Helping members and giving them clarity

Landing some big OH&S wins

Making workplaces safer and letting people know their rights

ORGANISERS · SAFETY HISTORY & TRAINING

EVERY ORGANISER WANTS MORE TRAINING

4/6 had no history in health and safety

4/6 had done varying levels of training

2/6 were HSRs before becoming an organiser

TRAINING THEY'D LIKE

- Tertiary education
- The 5-day union training
- Detailed WorkCover training
- Yearly or bi-yearly refreshers on legislation changes

Untrained organisers said lack of time is what stops them.

ORGANISERS · CONFIDENCE

HALF AREN'T CONFIDENT ADVISING ON OH&S

3/6

not confident advising members

They generally contact the union's safety officer for guidance.

Confident on

- Reasonable safety expectations
- Electing a DWG or HSR
- Safety in their own specialty

What would build confidence

- Training
- A central repository of documents and resources

ORGANISERS · SEGMENTS

TWO MAIN ORGANISER GROUPS

GROUP A

WITH A HISTORY IN OH&S

Usually as an HSR, with the training that comes with it. Far more confident advising on common processes such as writing a PIN.

GROUP B

WITH LITTLE OH&S EXPERIENCE

No time as an HSR and no completed training. Less confident dealing with OH&S matters.

PART THREE

HOW CAN WE EXPECT OUR APP TO BE USED?

Mapping each feature to the four groups we met: two kinds of HSR, two kinds of organiser.



FEATURE MAP · 1 OF 2

INFORMATION IS FOR EVERYONE

		HSR · no system	HSR · has a system	Organiser · confident	Organiser · little experience
INFORMATION	Search	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Share	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Tips and resources on a hazard	✓	✓	✓	✓
MANAGEMENT	Make lists	✓	✓	—	—
	Email hazards (paper trail)	✓	✓	—	—
	Set reminders	✓	✓	—	—
LOGGING	Add details, date and photos	✓	—	—	—
	Checklists on each hazard	✓	✓	—	—

FEATURE MAP · 2 OF 2

TOOLS TAILORED TO EACH ROLE

		HSR · no system	HSR · has a system	Organiser · confident	Organiser · little experience
HSR TOOLS	Your rights and role as an HSR	✓	✓	–	–
	Contact your union	✓	✓	–	–
	Tips on process (e.g. writing a PIN)	✓	✓	–	–
	Guidance when something happens	✓	✓	–	–
	Before / during / after incident checklist	✓	✓	✓	✓
ORGANISER TOOLS	Steps for advising on OH&S matters (serving a PIN etc.)	–	–	–	✓