



Research summary
February 2020

Research Intent

The initial round of interviews is to learn from workers in the field

1. Behaviours and attitudes of Union organisers and HSR around finding and distributing information regarding OHS.
2. HSR's process' before/during/after an incident report is lodged.
3. Overall engagement and experiences in their roles.



HSRs

HSRs



Makeup

10 male
3 female



Location

Metropolitan Melbourne
Regional Victoria -
(Bendigo, Shepparton
and eastern Victoria)



Unions

AWU, UWU, AEU,
ANMF, HSU, CPSU



Industries

Manufacturing,
Construction,
Healthcare, Education
Correctional services



Experience as HSR

1 year - 4 people
2-3 years - 3 people
4-10 years - 3 people
10+ years - 3 people



Brief summary

Overall engagement and experiences in their roles.



The main challenges for the interviewees were getting support from management, and sometimes getting their workmates confident enough to speak up on safety concerns. Being made a target or career repercussions were also common challenges.



The main rewards are visibly seeing improvements and having a safer and happier work group.

Finding and distributing information regarding OHS.



All interviewees were approached, usually verbally for information regarding safety in the workplace. For the more involved HSR's sometimes workmates will call/message out of hours. If there is a follow up its always in person.



The most common way of sourcing information was Google (7/13). Looking up on the worksafe site and official documents such as regs/the act and department guidelines were other ways cited by interviewees.

Dealing with hazards.

All HSR's noticed the issue themselves or were alerted by word of mouth

6/13 HSR's have served a PIN but it's always seen as a last resort and all HSR's will go out of their way to fix problems before it gets to that stage.

Dealing with hazards.

Nearly all HSRs talked to had a monthly safety meeting. Workplaces with better safety used these in a meaningful way to review issues and address them/follow them up.

Sharing the minutes via printout was common and all HSR's used a list to document issues around the workplace, usually with a severity/seriousness ranking as a way to know which issues to deal with first.

2/7 noted that there was an official digitised system to log safety issues with only one of those used effectively.

Dealing with hazards.

Some improvements suggested were

- sending photos of issues to management,
- all sites using the same systems
- an app for risk assessment and housekeeping audits
- regular walk arounds
- educating other workers
- reviewing procedures to improve them.

A reoccurring idea was that HSRs would like a tool to help with housekeeping/process/a stepped approach to dealing with issues

Difference between white/blue collar

Hazards

Common themes for white collar HSRs are occupational violence and aggression, fatigue/workload and stress. Blue collar enquires tend to be more environmental and physical.

Not much else

However apart from the nature of hazards, most other questions asked were answered in a similar nature.



Segments

Two main HSR groups

HSRs with a working system to log issues

Workplaces with endorsed systems to log issues tended to be more white collar but some blue collar workplaces observed also had systems.

HSRs without a working system to log issues

Workplaces without in house systems tended to be smaller workplaces or more blue collar environments.



Organisers

Organisers



Makeup

3 male
3 female



Location

Metropolitan Melbourne
Regional Victoria -
(Bendigo, eastern
Victoria)



Unions

AWU, AEU, ANMF



Industry

Manufacturing,
Construction,
Healthcare,
Education



Experience

< 1 year - 1 person
< 5 years - 2 people
10+ years - 3 people



Brief summary

Overall engagement and experiences in their roles.



Rewards: Being able to help and provide clarity for members. Having some big OHS wins. Making workplaces safer and letting people know their rights.



Challenges: Getting people to push back in the face of adversity, a lack of understanding of what OHS is (not just physical but psychological). Changing people minds about the importance of OHS. After wins there is always more to do

Safety History/Training

4/6 Organisers spoken to didn't have a history in Health and safety. With 4/6 having done varying levels of training. 2/6 were HSRs before becoming an organiser.

When asked, all organisers would like to do more training, with tertiary education, the 5 day union training, detailed workcover training and yearly/bi-yearly refreshers on updates and legislation changes being cited as training they would like to do. Untrained organisers mentioned that not having enough time to do training as a reason for not pursuing training.

Confidence

3/6 organisers said that they weren't confident advising members around OHS issues and said that they would generally contact the Safety officer at the union for guidance on safety issues.

Common areas of confidence included general advice around reasonable safety expectations, advising around electing a DWG/HSR and safety in relation to their specific specialty

When asked what might build confidence answers included training and a central repository of documents and resources.



Segments

Two main organiser groups

Organisers with a history of OH&S

Organisers with a history in OH&S, usually as a HSR and training that comes with this experience had a lot more confidence advising around common process such as writing a PIN.

Organisers with not much OH&S experience

Organisers who had no experience as a HSR themselves, or who hadn't completed training were less confident in dealing with OH&S matters.



How can we expect our app is used?

		HSR with no system in place	HSR with system to log issues	Organiser confident on safety matters	Organiser with no/little safety experience
Information	Search	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Share	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Get tips/resources on hazard	✓	✓	✓	✓
Management	Make lists	✓	✓	✗	✗
	Email hazards (paper trail/evidence)	✓	✓	✗	✗
	Set reminders	✓	✓	✗	✗
Logging issues	Add details, date, photos	✓	✗	✗	✗
	Checklists on each hazard	✓	✓	✗	✗
HSR tools	Your rights and role as a HSR	✓	✓	✗	✗
	Contact your union	✓	✓	✗	✗
	Tips on process (eg writing a PIN)	✓	✓	✗	✗
	Guidance on what to do when something happens	✓	✓	✗	✗
	checklist of before/during/after incident	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organiser tools	Steps around advising on OHS matters (serving a PIN etc)	✗	✗	✗	✓