

Work Health and Safety Officer (WHSO) information guide

Background

On 23 October 2017, the Queensland Parliament passed amendments to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, including introducing the ability for a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to appoint a WHSO for that business or undertaking. A person can only be appointed as a WHSO if they hold a WHSO certificate of authority.

The appointment of a WHSO is permissible as evidence that a PCBU has taken action to mitigate health and safety risks.

General functions of a WHSO

As a WHSO, your functions are to:

- notify the PCBU about work health and safety matters
- identify hazards and risks to health and safety arising from the work
- report in writing to the PCBU any hazards and risks identified arising from the work
- immediately notify the PCBU about:
 - any incident the WHSO is aware has occurred at the business or undertaking; or
 - any immediate or imminent risk to health and safety at the business or undertaking
- investigate, or assist in the investigation of, any incidents that occurred at the business or undertaking
- accompany and assist an inspector during an inspection of the business or undertaking
- establish educational and training programs on matters relating to work health and safety.

A PCBU may appoint themselves as a WHSO. In this circumstance, their general functions are to:

- investigate, or assist in the investigation of, any incidents that occurred at the business or undertaking
- accompany and assist an inspector during an inspection of the business or undertaking
- establish educational and training programs on matters relating to work health and safety.

Assessment functions of a WHSO

As a WHSO, you must assess risks arising from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking at least every 12 months, and provide an assessment report to your PCBU. The report must include any identified risks to health and safety, and recommendations about managing these risks.

If there is a health and safety committee at your workplace, the committee:

- must also be given the assessment report
- may negotiate with you about when to conduct this assessment
- may also approve a work health and safety criteria for the assessment with which you must comply.

Laws and compliance

These resources provide more information about how to comply with workplace health and safety requirements.

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

The Office of Industrial Relations website is a comprehensive resource for work health and safety legislation, resources, information guides and technical information to assist in meeting Queensland's health and safety obligations.

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-health-and-safety-laws/laws-and-legislation/work-health-and-safety-act-2011

The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act) provides a balanced and nationally consistent framework to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces.

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-health-and-safety-laws/laws-and-legislation/work-health-and-safety-regulation-2011

The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (WHS Regulation) describes how to prevent or minimise risks at your workplace.

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-health-and-safety-laws/laws-and-legislation/codes-of-practice

There are a number of approved codes of practice under the WHS Act. From 1 July 2018, PCBUs are required to comply with an approved code of practice under the WHS Act. Alternatively duty holders can follow another method, such as a technical or an industry standard, to manage hazards and risks, as long as it provides an equivalent or higher standard of work health and safety to the standard required in the code.

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/58170/Manage-WHS-risks-COP-2011.pdf

The *How to manage work health and safety risks Code of Practice* provides practical guidance for persons who have duties under the WHS Act and WHS Regulation to manage risks to health and safety. This code applies to all types of work and all workplaces covered by the WHS Act.

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/forms-and-resources/newsletter/esafe-newsletters/subscribe-to-eneews

The Office of Industrial Relations provides a free email subscription service to keep industry informed on a range of topics and health and safety issues that affect workplaces in Queensland.

© *The State of Queensland 2018*

Copyright protects this document. The State of Queensland has no objection to this material being reproduced, but asserts its right to be recognised as author of the original material and the right to have the material unaltered.

The material presented in this publication is distributed by the Queensland Government as an information source only. The State of Queensland makes no statements, representations, or warranties about the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this publication, and the reader should not rely on it. The Queensland Government disclaims all responsibility and all liability (including, without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs you might incur as a result of the information being inaccurate or incomplete in any way, and for any reason.