



# Work Health and Safety Committee

## Terms of Reference

## Introduction

Clause 67.2 of the [Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2024-2027](#) (Enterprise Agreement) provides for the establishment of a Work Health and Safety Committee (WHSC), consistent with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (the WHS Act).

## Agreement

The WHSC agrees to use its best endeavours to consult, communicate and advance matters brought before it promptly, consistent with the functions outlined in s77 of the WHS Act. This includes providing members of the WHSC access to relevant information in relation to workplace hazards and their associated risks, and the health and safety of workers, in accordance with s79(3) of the WHS Act.

## Role of the WHSC

1. The role of the WHSC is to:
  - a. facilitate co-operation between the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) and MOP(S) Act employees in instigating, developing, and carrying out measures designed to ensure the health and safety of MOP(S) Act employees at work, to the extent practicable given the employment arrangements established by the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (the MOP(S) Act);
  - b. assist in developing standards, rules and procedures relating to health and safety that are to be followed or complied with at the workplaces of MOP(S) Act employees; and
  - c. perform other functions prescribed by the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* (the WHS Regulations) or agreed between PWSS and MOP(S) Act employees.
2. PWSS undertakes to include views and recommendations of the WHSC in relevant briefings to the Special Minister of State (the Minister) and to report back to the WHSC.
3. PWSS will facilitate reasonably necessary work time for members of the Committee to attend meetings and any other Committee purposes, such as preparing for meetings.

## Scope

4. PWSS' capacity to influence and control MOP(S) Act employment is limited. Examples of matters within PWSS' influence and control include conflict resolution, education, generalist HR and WHS advice and workplace investigations.

Examples of matters within Finance's influence and control include some issues relating to building and property maintenance and the fit-out of Senators and Members' offices.

Employees should consult directly with their employing Senator or Member on matters that are under the Senator or Member's influence and control. This may include, for example, matters relating to the direction of work, and the hours and place of work.

5. Matters not directly related to the health and safety of MOP(S) Act employees will not be considered by the Committee, and where relevant, will be referred to the [Employee Consultative Group \(ECG\)](#).

## WHSC Representation

6. Section 51 of the WHS Act provides that work groups be established and a minimum of one Health and Safety Representative (HSR) be elected for each work group.
7. Current work groups for MOP(S) Act employees will be based on party lines, with the number of HSR and Deputy HSR positions allocated to work groups proportionate to the number of employee positions in each work group.
8. Workers within each work group are responsible for determining their representatives. PWSS can assist employees of Independent Senators and Members in a process for selecting HSRs and Deputy HSRs.
9. Each elected HSR is automatically a MOP(S) Act employee representative on the WHSC, in accordance with s76(2) of the WHS Act.
10. In addition, Deputy HSRs from each work group may attend the Committee as a substitute employee representative if an HSR for their work group is unavailable. It is the responsibility of a HSR to arrange for a Deputy HSR to attend any meetings that the HSR is unable to. Where a Deputy HSR attends a meeting in place of an HSR at the HSR's request, they are counted as a MOP(S) Act employee representative for their work group for the duration of the meeting. HSRs who will be absent from a Committee meeting are asked to advise PWSS prior to the meeting of any substitution arrangements they have made, to ensure that relevant information is provided to the substitute employee representative.
11. Where a general election or other circumstance occurs that changes the numbers of MOP(S) Act employee positions in a party or grouping, to the extent that the number of HSRs and Deputy HSRs allocated to each work group is no longer proportionate to the total number of employee positions in a work group, work groups will be restructured. It is a requirement under s75 of the WHS Act that a Committee be established within two months of a request from either a HSR or five employees at a workplace.
12. In the current (47th) Parliament, the total number of HSRs and Deputy HSRs is as follows:

| Work Group  | HSRs | Deputy HSRs |
|---|------|-------------|
| Australian Labor Party  | 5    | 3           |
| Liberal Party of Australia  | 3    | 2           |
| The Nationals   | 1    | 1           |
| Australian Greens   | 1    | 1           |
| Representative for staff of Independent Parliamentarians and Minority Parties | 1    | 1           |
|   | 11   | 8           |

13. There may be one representative on the Committee from each union covering MOP(S) Act employees.
14. There will be no more than five management representatives at any meeting of the Committee, including a nominee of the Minister and/or representatives from PWSS.

## Term of Office

15. In accordance with s64 of the WHS Act, HSRs will serve terms of three years, unless work groups are restructured, the HSR ceases to be a worker for the work group, the HSR resigns from the role, the HSR is disqualified under s65 or the HSR is removed by a majority of members of the work group.

## Operations of the WHSC

16. Meetings will be held on a regular basis as agreed by the Committee, with a minimum of one meeting every three months as required by s78 of the WHS Act.
17. Meetings may be held any reasonable time at the request of at least half of the WHSC members.
18. Committee meetings will not be held following the dissolution of the Parliament, except by urgent request.
19. A formal meeting of the Committee will only be constituted when there is attendance from at least:
  - a. five employee representatives;
  - b. one union representative; and
  - c. one management representative
20. The date of each meeting will be agreed during the previous meeting.
21. PWSS will provide secretariat support and chair each meeting as facilitator.
22. MOP(S) Act employees, employed under the terms and conditions of the [Enterprise Agreement](#), or their representatives (including union representatives), may attend meetings of the Committee in the capacity of observers, noting they may be requested to provide information about specific issues, or to leave for discussions of a confidential nature.
23. PWSS will call for agenda items at least two weeks before the meeting. Agenda items and any relevant papers should be provided to PWSS so that they may be distributed to members as early as possible prior to the meeting. PWSS will distribute the meeting agenda to members at least five working days prior to the meeting.
24. Meetings may need to be called in addition to the four meetings per calendar year and this may necessitate compressed timeframes for the calling of agenda items and submission of papers.
25. Matters may also be required to be considered out of session, with specific consultative timeframes advised. Recognising that the Committee role is in addition to the day-to-day role of members, matters to be considered out of session will be kept to a minimum where possible, with guidance on documents requiring feedback and those provided for information and interest only.
26. In the interest of achieving the best possible health and safety outcomes for all MOP(S) employees, regardless of their Work Group, all members of the Committee agree to engaging and consulting in positive, outcomes-focussed and mutually respectful discussion.
27. PWSS will endeavour to distribute the record of discussion of a meeting to the Committee within five working days of the meeting being held. Committee members will provide comments or suggested changes as soon as practicable to PWSS. The record of discussion will then be finalised and posted on the [PWSS website](#).