

Health & Safety Fact Sheet

WHSOs and Health and Safety Management during 2012

On 1 January 2012 the new *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* commenced in Queensland. This Act replaces the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* does not include the Workplace Health and Safety Officer (WHSO) position however our department, Department of Education and Training (DET), is retaining the WHSO position through a policy decision. This also reflects a whole of government approach to retain the WHSO role. The DET procedure HLS-PR-022 Workplace Health and Safety Officers is available at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/upcoming/hlsup022/index.html>.

As you may be aware, DET postponed all WHSO training during 2011 until advice was received from the Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG) regarding the training requirements for the future WHSO role. This advice was received in November 2011. During 2011 a number of companies promoted the Certificate IV in OHS as the required training for a WHSO, however, the advice from DJAG confirms that DET can provide in-house training for DET WHSOs.

From consultation with WHSOs and research into available courses, DET proposes to offer in house training as an alternative to the Cert IV course. This option will provide practical training, a course tailored to the DET environment and a refresher system. When compared to the Cert IV course, an in-house course provides a range of benefits to DET and DET staff.

DJAG has stated that a WHSO has 12 months from 1 January 2012 to complete training. However, due to the late confirmation of training options and the size and geographic dispersal of workplaces in DET it is likely that all of our WHSOs will *not* be fully trained by the end of the first 12 month period. DET will liaise directly with DJAG regarding this and negotiate appropriate timeframes for the completion of training.

Consequently, during 2012 some schools and workplaces may not have a trained WHSO. Importantly, even in the absence of a trained WHSO, there is no change to principals' and managers' ongoing responsibility to have systems in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and visitors.

The following minimum strategies are required to demonstrate management of health and safety at your workplace:

1. If your WHSO has left your school or workplace, or you have a new WHSO yet to undertake basic training, **establish local arrangements** to gain support and advice including liaising with:
 - existing school cluster groups
 - neighbouring schools or TAFE institutes with expertise including WHSOs
 - Regional Senior Health and Safety Consultants <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/hscontacts.html>.
2. **Have a functioning workplace health and safety committee in place** which ensures that:
 - a member of the management or administration team attends meetings or formal processes are in place to report to, and seek feedback from this leadership group
 - minutes of meetings are available
 - outcomes of meetings are shared with the whole staff group.
3. **Have a robust hazard reporting system in place** which ensures that:
 - all staff know how to report hazards
 - hazards and risks are assessed, actioned and outcomes are reported back to staff.
4. **Complete the Annual Assessment** (especially for schools and workplaces with more than 30 workers) to monitor the status of health and safety at the workplace:
 - the health and safety committee may be tasked with coordinating and compiling the assessment
 - staff with skills e.g. previously trained WHSOs, WHSR may be tasked with supporting and providing advice with the process

- through the completion of the Annual Assessment, principals and managers identify areas of health and safety management that require further work at their site.
5. **A member of staff attends local health and safety network meetings** and other professional development opportunities hosted in the region:
 - Regional Senior Health and Safety Consultants coordinate many of these meetings
 - a range of different staff may attend meetings according to the topic.
 6. **If the WHSO position is vacant**, and your workplace has 30 or more workers, identify a suitable staff member to take on the role. This will assist planning for the WHSO's training and support needs during 2012 and the ongoing workplace plans for health and safety management.

More information

Information on the new *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011* – visit our website at:
<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/whs-legislation.html>

Contact Regional [Senior Health and Safety Consultants](#) for health and safety enquiries

Schools and DET workplaces using MyHR – (DET access only)
<https://oneportal.deta.qld.gov.au/Services/HumanResources/Projects/MyHR/Trainingandsupport/Pages/WHS.aspx>