# Workload Management Procedure for adoption by VPS departments and entities

## **1. Purpose**

This procedure has been developed to assist employees work with their manager to design work practices that promote wellbeing, work-life balance and prevent harm in environments where workload has been identified as a health and safety hazard.

As there is no ‘one-size fits all’ approach to managing workload issues, a locally tailored approach is required to identify and address issues of relevance to each workplace.

This procedure is just one process that may be used to support business and operational planning activities. It does not define what is or is not a reasonable workload.

It is important to note that employers have a responsibility under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (**OHS Act**) to provide and maintain a safe work environment, including providing a safe and healthy workload for employees.

Employees who are experiencing workload issues are encouraged to speak to their manager in the first instance. Most concerns about workloads will be able to be managed through day to day interaction between employees and their manager, with reference to this procedure.

## **2. Scope**

This procedure is applicable to all employees when engaged in department / entity activities.

## **3. Principles of good workload management**

Effective workload management requires an understanding and acknowledgement that:

* the employer is responsible for effective workload management to maintain a safe work environment
* the employer is responsible for providing the necessary resources to ensure a safe place of work
* the employee and employer will work together to address concerns about the allocation of work in accordance with workplace health and safety legislation and policies and any relevant industrial agreement
* workload management forms part of normal business and work is allocated and prioritised to support strategic priorities and links to business, operational and workforce planning processes
* there are natural peaks and troughs in terms of workload associated with achieving service delivery requirements
* changes occur in workplaces daily and managers are responsible for managing workloads to ensure local and business area needs are met
* workload allocation considers the training, skill, knowledge, classification and position description of individual employees and the equitable distribution of workload across teams
* decisions regarding workload allocation consider the work-life balance of employees, including making suitable arrangements to cover planned leave to minimise workload impact on other staff
* employees will not be required to undertake work that significantly and regularly exceeds ordinary working hours
* workload management is informed by effective identification and analysis of data/information and accurate and consistent performance reporting
* issue escalation processes and dispute resolution mechanisms are in place and can be used where necessary

## **4. Signs of a possible workload management issue**

The most common issue relating to workload management is the concern that workloads are too high, but there could also be problems that arise from workloads being inconsistent, inequitably distributed or even too low.

Employees are entitled to raise their concerns directly with their managers regarding workload management if they believe their issues are not being addressed as part of day-to-day business. Employee/s may seek the support of a Health and Safety Representative (**HSR**) or union delegate to raise their workload management concern with their manager.

The need to examine workloads can be raised by an individual employee, group of employees or within a work unit, a line manager, or in some circumstances by someone external to the local work unit, such as a senior management board or a client.

From time to time, circumstances will arise that will generally prompt a re-examination of how work is managed and allocated within the team. This might occur as part of the usual business or operational planning cycle, or in response to a specific event.

Circumstances within the workplace that indicate that workloads may need to be reviewed can include:

* workload management issue reported as a safety hazard or incident
* introduction of new programs or work
* major organisational change, including staffing changes
* new or revised business or strategic plans
* changes to, or reprioritisation of services
* changes in the external environment such as legislative changes, introduction of new professional or qualification standards
* budgetary/economic factors
* changes within the work unit’s client base
* developments in community expectations
* failure to achieve work unit goals or targets
* increase in unplanned absences
* high levels of recreation leave accruals
* high rates of overtime
* high levels of accrued time off in lieu (TOIL)
* outcomes of People Matter Survey, staff opinion or health and wellbeing surveys
* increased numbers of complaints (internal and/or external)
* conflict around role clarity
* above average staffing turnover.

## **5. Process steps**

### Stage 1 – Process for local resolution

The following process set out in **Table 1** outlines the steps for managing a workload management issue identified by one or more employees. The process can also be used proactively by managers to engage with employees to ensure a safe work environment.

If the workload issue presents a risk to employee health and safety, the hazard and incident reporting process should also be followed.

Employees may seek support of a Health and Safety Representative (**HSR**) or union delegate at any stage of the process. Where employees are represented by a HSR, consultation must involve the HSR.

Both employees and managers may seek the assistance of Human Resources or the department’s/entity’s safety team at any stage of the process.

**Table 1: Steps for managing a workload management issue identified by one or more employees**

| **Step** | **Action** | **Who** | **Relevant tools** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Hazard / incident identification**  **Employee/s discuss issue with their manager**  **Report issue in the hazard and incident management system.**  Employee/s should discuss issues relating to workload informally with heir manager in the first instance and give them a reasonable opportunity to respond.  Factors that employee/s could raise with their manager could include:  the reasons they believe there is a workload issue  objective indicators and/or evidence that supports this view  proposed action to resolve the issue.  The issue should also be reported in the hazard and incident management system. | Employee/s | ‘Workload management – a guide for managers’ provides guidance as to what needs to be considered by managers when dealing with workload issues.  The guide provides several worksheets referred to below.  **Worksheet 1– Hazard /incident identification of workload issues** contains examples of workload indicators and measures and can be used to collect data for issue identification. |
| **2** | **Hazard analysis and risk assessment**  **Manager to analyse the hazard to determine underlying causes or contributing factors**  An analysis will be carried out by the manager to understand the nature of the workload issue, including underlying causes or contributing factors.  Managers must determine the level of risk associated with the identified workload hazard, the impact of such risk and the consequence of taking or not taking any action.  Employee/s may be asked to be involved in this process, depending on their level of knowledge of the identified factors.  Where employees are represented by a HSR consultation must involve the HSR. | Manager  Employee/s  HSR/s | **Worksheet 2 – Analysis of workload hazards** provides a template to consider the range of factors involved, the associated risks and possible impacts on the work unit and employees, including work unit outcomes and health and safety.  **Worksheet 3 – Risk assessment matrix** provides a risk evaluation framework for assessing and analysing the risks. There may also be alternative risk assessment tools already in use. |
| **3** | **Develop options**  **Manager to communicate outcome to employee/s. Further action required**  If the manager determines that action is required, options or actions will be developed by the manager and communicated to employee/s and HSR/s where relevant to manage the associated risks.  **No further action required**  If the manager determines that no action is required, the reasons why this view was formed will be communicated in writing to the employee/s and HSR/s where relevant. The manager will monitor the risk in regular business planning activities.  Employee/s who remain dissatisfied may submit a Workload Review Request – refer to Stage 2 below – or seek resolution through the hazard and incident reporting process or OHS issue resolution procedure. | Manager  Employee/s  HSR/s | **Worksheet 4 – Risk controls** provides a template to develop a list of options and actions to best resolve the workload issues and to manage the associated risks. This should be completed in consultation with affected employee/s and HSR/s where relevant. |
| **4** | **Risk controls**  **Manager to implement the actions (if any)**  An action plan will be developed by the manager, in consultation with employee/s to implement risk controls using the hierarchy of controls, including allocating various tasks, roles and responsibilities while stipulating agreed outcomes and performance targets.  Where employees are represented by a HSR consultation must involve the HSR. | Manager  Employee/s  HSR/s | **Worksheet 5 – Recommended actions for resolving workload risks** – provides a template to assist to incorporate factors that should be included. |
| **5** | **Review and report**  **Manager to monitor and review the actions on a regular basis and revise actions when necessary**  After an action plan has been implemented, the manager should undertake an assessment in consultation with employee/s and HSR/s where relevant to determine how effective and successful the actions have been in addressing the workload management issues. | Manager  Employee/s  HSR/s | **Worksheet 6 – Review** provides a template to assist in reviewing actions to ensure a safe and healthy work environment and continued achievement of desired business outcomes.  **Worksheet 7- Reporting** provides a template report form to track agreed actions. |

### Stage 2 – Formal Workload Review Request

If a workload management issue cannot be resolved informally using the process steps set out in Table 1, or where an employee or group of employees remain dissatisfied, **it may be formally escalated consistent with Clause 13 (Workload) of the VPS Agreement** using the process set out in Table 2 below.

Any escalated workload management issue should also be dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. Throughout this process employee/s must be kept updated on developments and progress being made.

Consistent with Clause 13 (Workload) of the VPS Agreement, if a workload management issue is escalated by an individual or group of employees, the following process is to be followed. If the workload issue presents a risk to employee health and safety, the hazard and incident reporting process should also be followed.

**Table 2: Steps regarding lodging a Workload Review Request**

| **Step** | **Action** | **Who** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Employee/s submit a Workload review form to [insert name][[1]](#footnote-2)**  An employee or group of employees may request a review of their workload if they believe the workload is unreasonable. The request must be in writing using the **Workload Review Request Form** and submit it to the[insert name]**.** The request must set out details of the workload and the reasons why the workload is considered unreasonable and the risks to health and safety it presents.  The [insert contacct] must report the request in the hazard and incident management system and refer the request to the relevant management for their action. | [insert name]  Employee/s |
| **2** | **Management to respond to request in writing within 21 days**  Upon receipt of a request by an employee or group of employees, management must provide a written response within 21 days, stating whether the request has been granted or refused. | [insert name]  Manager |
| **3a** | **Review request supported**  If the review request is supported, a review of the workload of the employee or group of employees will be conducted. Depending on the complexity of the issue, the review may be undertaken by the manager using the steps outlined in the informal process outlined above or other more appropriate reviewer. | [insert name]  Manager |
| **3b** | **Review request not supported**  If the review request is not supported, the written response must include details of the reason for the refusal. Employee/s who remain dissatisfied may refer to the dispute resolution process (step 5). | [insert name]  Manager |
| **4** | **Implementation of review outcomes**  Following the completion of the review, the employee or group of employees and the employer shall agree on any necessary adjustments that are required to be implemented to ensure the workload for the employee or group of employees is reasonable. | Manager  Employees |
| **5** | **Dispute Resolution**  Where an employee or group of employee remains dissatisfied, the employee/s may refer the matter to the Resolution of Disputes process in accordance with clause 12 of the VPS Agreement and/or the OHS issue resolution process. | Employee |

## **6. Further information or assistance**

If you require any further information or assistance you can contact your local Safety Adviser, Health and Safety Representative or HR Business Partner or [insert any additional contacts].

## **7. Related information**

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)

Clause 12 (Resolution of Disputes) VPS Agreement

Clause 13 (Workload Management) VPS Agreement

Hazard and incident management procedure

OHS issue resolution procedure

WorkSafe Preventing and managing work-related stress – a guidebook for managers

Workload management – a guide for managers

Worksheet 1 – Tools for managers

Worksheet 2 – Analysis of workload issues

Worksheet 3 – Risk assessment matrix

Worksheet 4 – Options for resolving workload issues

Worksheet 5 – Recommended actions for resolving workload issues

Worksheet 6 – Review

Worksheet 7 – Reporting

*The ‘Workload Management Procedure for adoption by VPS departments and entities’ is an adaptation of the ‘Workload management A guide for employees’ developed by the state of Queensland (Queensland Public Service Commission).  We acknowledge their support in the reproduction of content.*

**Workload Review Request Form**

**Please read the Workload Management Procedure before completing this form.**

An employee, or a group of employees, who are experiencing workload issues, AND have not been able to resolve the issues at the local level, may submit a request for a formal Workload Review by completing this form and forwarding it to the contact listed below.

All workload review requests will be considered and feedback provided within 21 days of receipt of the request.

# Name of employee requesting a workload review

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Full name** |  | | | |
| **Work location** |  | | | |
| **Telephone number** | **(Landline)** |  | **(Mobile)** |  |
| **Job title** |  | | | |
| **Division** |  | | | |
| **Branch/Unit** |  | | | |

# Names of other employees requesting a review

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name(s)** |  |
| **Job title(s)** |  |

# Describe details of the workload and why it is considered unreasonable

|  |
| --- |
| Describe details and attach supporting data where relevant. |

# Describe the impact of the workload on you or your team (e.g. health and safety, increased personal leave, increased client complaints, not meeting deadlines etc)

|  |
| --- |
| Describe details and attach supporting data where relevant. |

# Indicate below what you understand to be the cause/s and contributing factors of the workload issue

Please tick all that apply.

Positions not filled

Capability of employees

Increased volume of work

Equipment not available

Involved in training of new employees

Change of duties, procedure or policy

Correct procedures not followed

Non-availability of casual employees

Other (please specify):

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# What is the timeframe during which your workload has been an issue?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Have you raised this workload issue before with your line manager?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes | No |

# If yes, what actions were previously taken by you and your manager to address the issue? What was the outcome of these actions?

| **Action taken** | **Outcome** |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

# Do you have any suggestions to resolve the workload issue?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Do you have a support person and/or representative?

You may have a support person and/or representative assist you at any time during the review. This may be a union representative, a HSR, a family member or another person.

If you have a support person and/or representative, please provide their details and indicate if you want to be contacted direclty or through your support person and/or representative.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** |  | | | |
| **Organisation (if applicable)** |  | | | |
| **Telephone number** | **(Landline)** |  | **(Mobile)** |  |
| **Email address** |  | | | |
| **Do you want us to contact you, or your support person/ representative, in the first instance?** | [Please identify who we should contact first] | | | |

Please send your completed for to [inset name / role] by email [insert email details].

The [inset name / role] will contact you to confirm receipt of this form and outline next steps.

1. For example, Review Registrar, Senior Manager, HR Contact etc [↑](#footnote-ref-2)