

Workplaces are a major place to invest in reform, the work that has been done to ensure physical safety of employees has by far outperformed mental health in comparison. Workplaces across the country may be required to have Health and safety representatives in place, the roles and responsibilities are listed below.

Health and safety representatives

A HSR represents the health and safety interests of a work group. There can be as many HSRs and deputy HSRs as needed, after consultation, negotiation and agreement between workers and the persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU).

Powers and functions

The role of a HSR

The role of a HSR is generally limited to their own work group unless:

- there is a serious risk to health or safety (created by an immediate hazard) affecting workers from another work group
- a worker in another work group asks for the HSR's assistance, and the HSR for that other work group is found to be unavailable.

An elected HSR is entitled to perform the following tasks for the work group:

- undertake workplace inspections
- review the circumstances of workplace incidents
- accompany a WHSQ inspector during an inspection
- represent the work group in health and safety matters
- attend an interview about health and safety matters with a worker from the work group (with the consent of the worker)
- request that a health and safety committee be established
- participate in a health and safety committee
- monitor compliance measures
- investigate work health and safety complaints from work group members
- inquire into any risk to the health and safety of workers in the work group
- issue [provisional improvement notices](#) and direct a worker to cease unsafe work (where the HSR has completed the approved training).

(Queensland Government website, last updated February 2019)

There is a lack of commitment to the psychological safety of employees in many workplaces, and the training provided to HSR's does not adequately provide resources to assist with psychological risks. Investment into mental health and psychological safety is vital. Investment into understanding the benefits of a role such as Mental Health Advocate (MHA) may assist workplaces provide mentally healthier systems. Work is being done throughout Australia in isolation and needs to be consolidated. An example of how such a role can be beneficial is being pioneered by companies such as Energy Queensland Ltd.

Stigma around the disclosure of mental illness or developing mental health problems needs to be realistically addressed by workplaces. Guidelines and requirements need to be in place and demonstrated to ensure employers and employees are adequately supported. Currently males are leading the suicide rates in Australia, the stigma around speaking up and seeking help can often be a major barrier. The utilisation of lived experience and peer support networks to break down barriers is somewhere workplaces could invest in. MHA's may be able to fulfil this role within a business, additionally this may assist with stigma reduction. The role of MHA can assist businesses perform psychological risk assessments, assist with job design requirements, assist employees with help seeking, provide education and support.