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Next Steps for Managing Psychosocial risks in retail

Final report for SDA

Research team: A/Prof Carlo Caponecchia
and A/Prof Sharron O'Neill



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Executive summary

Exposure to psychosocial hazards is a key workplace health and safety concern, highlighted by recent changes to WHS Regulation, Codes of Practice and International Standards. Employers in all industries have an obligation to ensure workers are safe from psychosocial hazards. In occupations such as retail work, workers can be exposed to a wide range of psychosocial hazards, including high workloads, low job control, role conflict, poor supervision and support, and violence and abuse.

In 2023, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) commissioned an independent survey of members regarding the psychosocial hazards to which they may be exposed. The response was overwhelming with over 11,000 responses received. Of the critical hazards reported in those responses, the most frequently identified were:

- > Inadequate Staffing
- > Work Overload
- > Low Job Control
- > Poor Change Management
- > Low Leader/Supervisor Support
- > Customer Aggression and Violence
- > Dangerous Tasks

Having identified these risks and the depth of concern among retail workers, this follow up project was commissioned by the SDA to develop ways forward to help identify and address these hazards across the sector. Drawing on the real experiences of workers in retail environments, a series of case studies were developed which highlight psychosocial hazards in retail workplaces. The research team then consulted with a representative group of workers to develop and explain appropriate strategies to manage the potential risks generated by the hazards identified in the case studies.

Safe levels of staffing was a consistent theme throughout the discussions. Many of the hazards exemplified through the case studies could have been addressed either in whole, or in part, with more appropriately trained workers. For example, more workers would have reduced workload pressure across all cases; in some cases more workers are needed at particular times; for others, workers with a different set of skills or experience are required.

Staffing levels have traditionally been treated by industrial tribunals as an area of managerial prerogative. However, with the recognition of psychosocial hazards

comes an obligation on employers to ensure staffing levels are sufficient to ensure workers' health and safety. Safe staffing was therefore treated as a baseline intervention across the case studies so as to ensure that additional work re-design strategies were explored.

The basic risk management process informed this work, which relied on work re-design as the key approach to controlling risks for psychosocial hazards. This contrasts with individual level interventions (such as stress management, mindfulness, wellness and access to sources of support), which are more commonly used in relation to psychosocial hazards, although are less effective at eliminating or minimising sources of harm present within systems of work.

A series of seven case studies were developed by the SDA WHS committee in collaboration with the research team. Case studies comprised online order picking, supermarket self-check and back-dock operations, fast food, hardware, liquor and small fashion retail environments. The case studies, information on psychosocial hazards and risks and information on how to develop work re-design strategies were provided to a sample of retail workers at a workshop. The workshop participants collaborated in small groups to identify and describe the psychosocial hazards present in the cases, and then develop work re-design strategies that could be considered when planning to address the risks. Small groups also developed change logic for their proposed redesigns, outlining how and why the proposed re-design strategy would work to address the hazard(s).

Broadly, the re-design strategies considered, for example:

- > **procedural and policy changes**
 - e.g. stopping or transferring urgent orders at busy times; the inclusion of particular worker roles in consultative committees; providing different levels of service at different times;
- > **changes to task timing, staffing and support**
 - e.g. ensuring breaks, ensuring appropriate staffing levels, opportunities for support from other workers and supervisors; and
- > **equipment and environment re-designs**
 - e.g. re-allocating spaces used for various tasks/roles; provision of duress alarms; storing equipment and stock in different locations, based on insights from sales data.

While ensuring safe levels of staffing was a consistent theme throughout the discussions, the additional work re-design strategies identified by workshop participants highlight several important issues in general WHS management. These included: the need for effective and meaningful consultation with workers when designing risk controls; the interaction between physical environments and psychosocial hazards; issues of age, experience and culture, and how these should be considered when designing risk controls; and how psychosocial hazards can be generated during responses to incidents, through poor investigation and procedural fairness practices, and poor experiences when returning to work following injury.

It should be noted that a redesign strategy has not necessarily been provided for every identified hazard in each case. The complexity and inter-related nature of psychosocial hazards means that implementing one redesign can sometimes address multiple hazards. Taken together, the suite of cases also demonstrates how the same hazard may be addressed through different redesign strategies, depending on the specific work context. Given the importance of context, organisations seeking to use the case studies should not expect, nor need, them to match their operations exactly for the cases and redesigns to be useful.

Organisations can use the case studies developed in this project in various ways, including:

- > upskilling managers in awareness of psychosocial hazards and useful risk controls;
- > starting conversations and participative processes to re-design controls for psychosocial risks in their own retail environments, and
- > reflecting on the efficacy of existing risk controls in addressing sources of harm as opposed to merely supporting individual workers to deal with the consequences of hazard exposure.

The [Discussion](#) section of this report summarises key hazards and risk controls including the identified work re-design solutions. Some controls feature across multiple case studies, while others were relevant to specific case studies. To assist users, an Index lists the identified hazards and relevant case studies in which they are discussed along with proposed work re-design strategies specific to the case study scenario.

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1. Background



Psychosocial hazards and risks

Employers have had a legal duty to prevent psychological harm to workers for some decades. Despite this, the number of compensated mental health condition claims has doubled from 6,104 in 2009 to 12,404 by 2021. Average time lost per claim increased from 13 weeks to 34.7 weeks over the same period and median claim costs more than tripled from \$18,600 in 2009 to \$53,949 in 2019 (pre-covid) and \$58,715 by 2021 (Safe Work Australia, 2024). Efforts to strengthen the prevention of psychological injury at work have seen a new clause on psychosocial hazards and risks added to WHS Regulations in most States and Territories. This is consistent with recommendations from the Boland Review of WHS arrangements (Victoria remains a notable exception, although proposed regulatory changes are under consultation). Most States have also developed a Code of Practice on Psychosocial risk.

The psychosocial WHS Regulations essentially outline what psychosocial hazards are, that they should be identified, and should be controlled in a manner consistent with all other work-related risks to health and safety. Importantly, the WHS Regulations also point to the need to take account of the interaction between hazards, and how the design of work can create hazards.

Psychosocial hazards are commonly defined as:

“aspects of job content, work organisation and management, and environmental and organisational conditions that have the potential for psychological and physical harm” (Cox, 1993; see also McKay et al. 2004).

Definitions in the Regulation and Codes of Practice are similar, focusing on how aspects of work tasks and work organisation can cause physical and psychological harm, though there are inevitable changes in some of the language used. Common examples of psychosocial hazards include (see also Appendix 1):

- > Job content
- > Job demands
- > Role conflict
- > Role ambiguity
- > Job control and autonomy
- > Work environment and equipment
- > Remote and/or isolated work
- > Job security
- > Relationships, supervision and support
- > Workload, pace/timing, schedule of tasks
- > Workplace Bullying
- > Violence, aggression and abuse
- > Harassment and sexual harassment
- > Discrimination behaviours
- > Recognition, reward and opportunity for career development

These are examples, and psychosocial hazards can be described in ways that diverge from these examples, yet still fit the definition of psychosocial hazards.

The terminology used to describe the hazards, or examples of hazards, can change depending on the nature of the hazard(s) being discussed, and terminology preferences and conventions. For example, sometimes hazards may be preceded by an adjective (e.g. “poor change management”; “low job control”; “high role conflict”). In this report we tend to rely on brief descriptions of the hazards as they are experienced in a scenario, rather than using adjectives before the hazard term.

Changing the way work is done is viewed as the most effective way to control the risks that arise from psychosocial hazards. This is known as work re-design, and can comprise a range of actions, that make changes to, for example:

- > what the tasks are
- > who does the work
- > who supervises the work
- > the equipment and resources used
- > the physical environment in which the work is done
- > the processes and systems that influence the work

Work re-design approaches contrast with the more frequently used strategies that focus instead on changing the way individuals respond to the hazards (e.g. stress management training, mindfulness, resilience training), or provide support or general health and wellbeing interventions (see Caponecchia et al., 2021; AIG 2020, Pescud, et al. 2015).

Psychosocial hazards can exist in all industries, and as recognised in the WHS Regulation, can interact both with each other and with all other types of workplace hazards. There are clear examples of these interactions, which should be recognised in all sectors, such as the influence of psychosocial hazards on hazardous manual tasks (Muggleton et al., 1999; Lang et al., 2014; Oakman et al., 2018). Other commonly recognised examples include how the availability or appropriateness of PPE can create anxiety (e.g. Lan et al. 2021). Co-occurrence of hazards is to be expected, as exposure to one hazard can automatically increase exposure to another. For example, a high workload in terms of number of tasks or duration spent performing the tasks will mean longer exposure to any other hazard experienced in the work scenario (e.g. exposure to biohazards, hazardous manual tasks). A further example is that job insecurity might be expected to occur with a lack of job control in many work scenarios, through reluctance to raise problems, or make changes to work for fear of losing one's job.

SDA member survey

In late 2023, the SDA commissioned a survey of members regarding the psychosocial hazards to which they may be exposed. Over 11,000 responses received, making this the largest response to any survey the SDA has ever undertaken. Of the critical hazards identified in those responses, the most frequently identified were:

- > Inadequate Staffing
- > Work Overload
- > Low Job Control
- > Poor Change Management
- > Low Leader/Supervisor Support
- > Customer Aggression and Violence
- > Dangerous Tasks

The current project

To act on these findings, the SDA then engaged the research team to assist with developing the next steps. In consultation with SDA leaders and the SDA's WHS committee, the current project was designed comprising:

- > Drafting, in collaboration with the SDA WHS committee members, a series of case studies that were representative of retail scenarios.
- > Refining the case studies, via a workshop with a sample of SDA members from around Australia to: identify psychosocial hazards evident in each case study; identify potential risk controls based around work re-design; and explain the change logic behind each proposed re-design.
- > Preparing a report summarising the hazards, re-designs and change logic for each case.

The drafting and workshop processes are described in the [Materials and methods](#) section in this report. The case studies, identified hazards, re-designs and change logics are presented in the [Case studies and workshop outcomes](#) section in the report.

Intended use of the case studies

The case studies developed in this project are intended to help develop guidance material that could be provided to industry. Elements of the report may form the basis of resources that could help organisations identify potential hazards in their operations and consider a range of possible re-design strategies that address the risks posed by those hazards. Redesign strategies, of course, must be considered in the context of the individual organisations, as would be the case for any risk management process. Alternatively, organisations may examine the types of hazards presented in case study scenarios that are different to their own context in order to understand more about how that type of hazard might be addressed.

- > Frameworks and models informing the project
- > This project was informed by a basic risk management approach, consistent with current WHS Regulation and the Codes of Practice on psychosocial hazards and risks in most Australian States and Territories. That is, organisations must identify psychosocial hazards and ensure the risks that arise from those hazards are effectively controlled, so far as reasonably practicable. Essential to the risk management processes is communication and consultation with workers throughout the risk identification and management process, and monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the controls and of risk management processes itself.

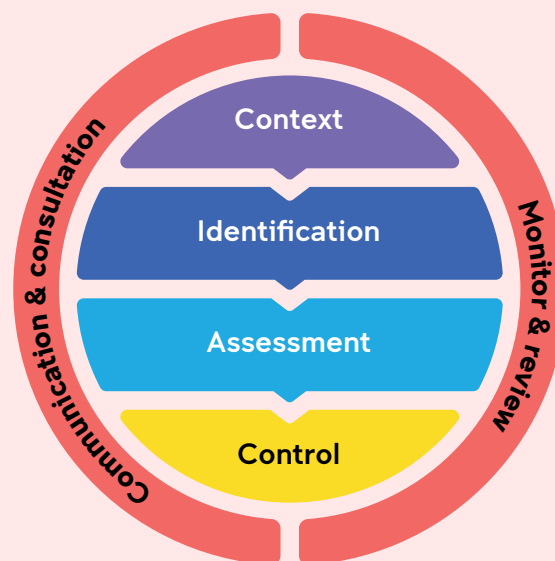
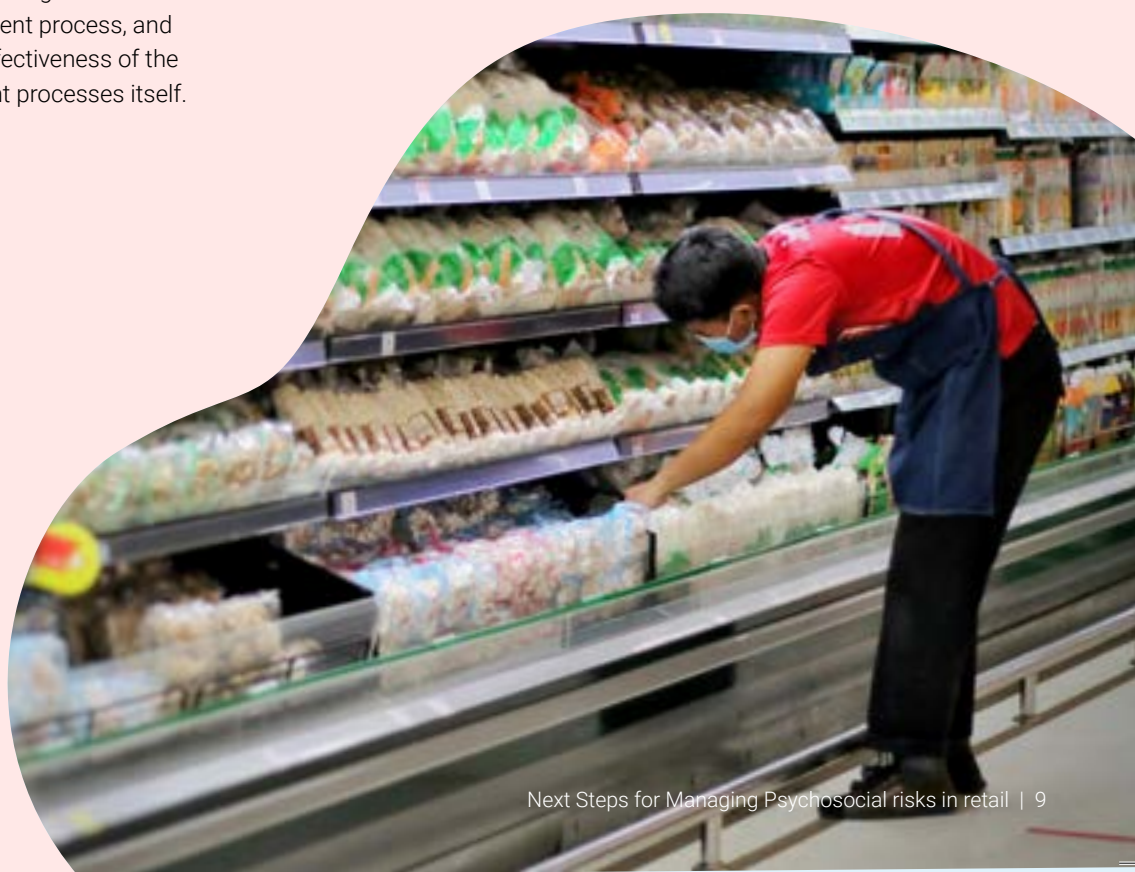


Figure 1.

Main elements of the risk management process
(based on ISO31000:2018)



Work re-design

A model of the elements of work re-design (see Figure 2) was used during the workshop to help participants consider a diverse range of possible re-design strategies focused on,

- > work-related **processes and systems**,
- > **equipment and resources** in the work system,
- > the **people** doing the work tasks,
- > the nature of the **tasks** performed, and
- > the **physical environment(s)** in which the work takes place.

The exact nature of these elements will change as the specific work scenario under consideration changes. As illustrated in Figure 2, these elements necessarily overlap (for example, the people undertaking the task can depend on the timing and nature of the task, and/or the physical environment in which the task is done).

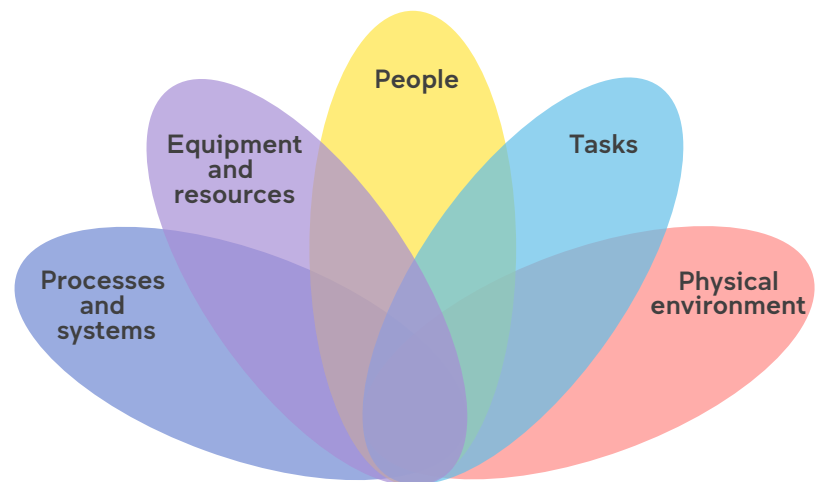


Figure 2. Elements of work design

(Source: centreforwhs.nsw.gov.au/tools/psychosocial-hazard-work-re-design-tool)

Understanding the system of work and re-designing work to eliminate hazards or better manage psychosocial risk was prioritised over controls that act primarily at the individual worker level. Examples of individual-level controls include efforts to support individuals who are experiencing the consequences of exposure to hazards and treat the harm they experience. These include referrals to employee assistance programs, stress management training, resilience training, mindfulness interventions, and exercise, health and wellbeing programs. While these interventions can be useful at one level, they typically do not address psychosocial hazards at the source and are reactive, rather than proactive (see Caponecchia et al, 2021). Work re-design, by contrast, is focused on changing the systems of work so that the sources of harm are removed, or exposure to them is minimised.

The icing on the cake

An analogy sometimes used to help understand the prioritisation of various risk controls for psychosocial risks is the “icing on the cake”. Many common strategies that are used by organisations, such as stress management and resilience training, mindfulness and meditation, and wellness programs, can be described as icing on the cake. No amount of icing fixes a bad cake.

Making the cake is akin to work design. Employers are charged with “making the cake”, as part of their WHS duties, such that it is free from sources of harm, i.e. so that work doesn’t have the potential to harm workers. Once that cake is made well – free from psychosocial risks – then other strategies (such as the icing) can be used in addition to embellish and further improve the cake.



Safe systems of work through safe staffing

The availability of appropriately trained and competent workers, at the times and locations required, is fundamental to safe systems of work (see Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2021). This is the case for most if not all sectors (e.g. healthcare, aged care), including retail (see Karanikas et al., 2023). Adequate staffing enables efficient productivity and discharge of a company's main objectives (Mani et al, 2014), and safety for workers through task sharing, available skill sets, skill development, supervision and support, and enabling appropriate breaks and rest.

Research suggests, however, that most retailers tend to understaff their stores (Nessertine, 2010; Ton 2009) and it is notable that concerns about adequate staffing featured heavily in the [2023 SDA member survey](#) (see above). Since the provision of adequate staffing is part of the baseline system design needed to help address several psychosocial hazards, the project focused on work re-design strategies that may be used in addition to headcount numbers to help reduce exposure to psychosocial hazards and risk. For example, where staffing levels were identified as an issue of concern in a case study, participants were directed to explore the causes, challenges and implications of existing staffing levels to enable a range of potential work-re-design options to be considered. These may include, but were not limited to, calls for increased staff levels. This approach is prudent given that increasing staff levels, though effective and critical for overall outcomes, may not always be the most immediately implementable solution due to factors such as worker shortages in an industry, or in a geographic area, or the time needed to train workers effectively. Proposing supplementary environmental, work and task re-design strategies may offer important benefits in reducing workers' risk exposure in the interim.

2. Materials and Methods



Development of the case studies

Seven case studies were developed in collaboration with the SDA WHS committee. The committee proposed areas of focus, grounded in lived experience, and over a series of meetings with the project team, these scenarios were further developed to present a comprehensive set of hazards across a range of realistic retail work environments. Cases reflected a range of sectors within the broader retail industry case, including grocery, hardware, fashion, liquor and small business. They covered front of store and customer interactions, as well as back of store and order-picking. The SDA ensured that retail environments of particular concern, and major hazards experienced by workers, were each considered and included. For example, this included: scenarios relating to injured workers returning to work; the potential limitations of workers of various ages and in small versus large businesses; and challenges for workers in changing work systems, such as moves to online order packing and supermarket self-checkout registers.

The case studies were then refined further to identify and eliminate duplication of key hazards and ensure clarity and conciseness. This included identifying elements of each case that were most important for the type of retailer, unique in relation to other cases, and appropriate for effective communication of the case.

It is important to note that the seven case studies were not intended to cover every possible retail situation, but rather to cover situations that strike a balance between being realistic, and also being applicable to retail environments beyond the one stated in each case study. The generalisability of the case material, the identified hazards, and proposed work re-designs is important for ensuring any guidance material developed from the case studies can be widely used to start conversations about psychosocial hazards and work re-design solutions. Organisations seeking to use the guidance should not expect, nor need, the case studies to match their operations exactly, since competent risk management will always require tailoring of approaches to the specific organisational context.

It is also important to note that the situations described in the case studies are composite experiences. That is, each case study does not reflect any one person's experience, but rather draws on a series of real experiences identified by workers and their representatives, and then re-constructs them for illustrative purposes into a coherent case study.

SDA member workshop


A one-day workshop was conducted with 27 SDA members in July 2024. These members worked across supermarkets; department, discount variety, and charity stores; and hardware, fuel and liquor retail environments. The workshop was intended to capitalise on participants' experience to ensure the validity of the case materials, and to increase participants' confidence in identifying psychosocial hazards, and in identifying and explaining potential work re-design strategies.

Specifically, the workshop aimed to use participants' expertise and experience to:

- > Identify hazards embedded in common retail scenarios
- > Develop work re-design strategies relevant to those scenarios
- > Explain how and why they suggested each redesign strategy (i.e. the change logic).

The change logic outlines how and why a proposed re-design is expected to work to address the identified hazard. It can also help describe any additional benefits that can be realised from the re-design, as well as any assumptions that may be expected to influence the effectiveness of the re-design. In this way, change logic can help with implementation planning, and evaluation methods for the proposed re-design strategies, as well as with tailoring the strategies to a particular organisational context.


Before the workshop, participants were provided with:

- > a briefing document on the purpose and format of the workshop
- > a workshop agenda
- > a brief document that defined psychosocial hazards and provided examples of common types of psychosocial hazards (see [Appendix 1](#) .

The intended outcomes of the workshop included:

- > Increased member confidence with identifying psychosocial hazards
- > Increased member confidence with identifying and explaining work re-design options
- > A refined set of case studies, each now also identifying relevant hazards and offering potential re-design strategies.

During the workshop, a brief presentation that provided background on psychosocial hazards and risks was provided to participants, along with information about work re-design and change logic. Participants then formed small groups of 4-6 people. Each group worked on one of the case studies along with a member of the SDA WHS committee. Groups first identified hazards in the case, before returning to the larger group to be given more information about work re-design and change logic, and subsequently went back to their small groups to start developing re-design strategies, and accompanying change logic for their design strategies.

Later in the workshop, 1-2 participants from each group swapped to a different group / case study, in order to provide feedback on the work completed so far and offer different perspectives. The workshop concluded with each small group presenting their work to the wider group. This was followed by discussion of the key themes that arose from the cases. The workshop agenda can be seen in [Appendix 2](#) .

The remainder of this report is based on the case study materials, and reflections on the workshop activities and discussion, including feedback from SDA members and the SDA WHS team, and the questions, concerns and insights offered by participants throughout the day, including in the Q&A sessions

Change logic

In the context of developing work re-design strategies, "Change logic" refers to describing how and why a proposed re-design strategy is supposed to operate in order to help address the risk.

Articulating the how and why can be useful for helping to build buy-in for the strategy, from workers and senior managers.

The change logic might also help design better strategies, if the logic doesn't seem to be particularly strong. The process of describing change logic for work re-design strategies can also help people to identify additional benefits of the re-design, in addition to addressing the intended risk(s).

Change logic can also be used to help identify opportunities for evaluation, for example, if a strategy works by increasing the amount of time a team spends working with one another, then perhaps there are ways to measure the amount of time spent working together, alongside other measures which might focus more on the intended outcome (e.g. reduced task completion time).

Change logic example

The following is an example of change logic that could be developed for a hypothetical hazard in a given workplace context.

Hazard: Poor supervision and support

Work re-design strategy: Scheduled group feedback sessions with supervisor on Thursday afternoons

Change logic: The proposed re-design strategy addresses the hazard of poor supervision by

- > Providing opportunities for recognition rather than feedback being perceived as negative.
- > Making feedback routine and expected in the workgroup.
- > Providing group-based feedback which enhances teamwork and shared goals, and reduces potential perception that feedback is personal.
- > Increasing support from management and reducing potential for perceptions of bullying/harassment.

The strategy may assist to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity that may be present in the work scenario.



3. Case studies

This section presents the seven case studies used in the SDA member workshop and reports on the hazards and re-design strategies that were identified through the workshop process. It must be acknowledged that there may be additional hazards, and/or other ways of describing the hazards, that were not identified and considered in the workshop, or alternative potential redesign strategies that may also be effective. The re-design strategies presented are examples of strategies that could be considered for implementation in the given scenario. Re-design strategies are not necessarily suggested for every single hazard identified, as multiple hazards are sometimes addressed by the same re-design strategy

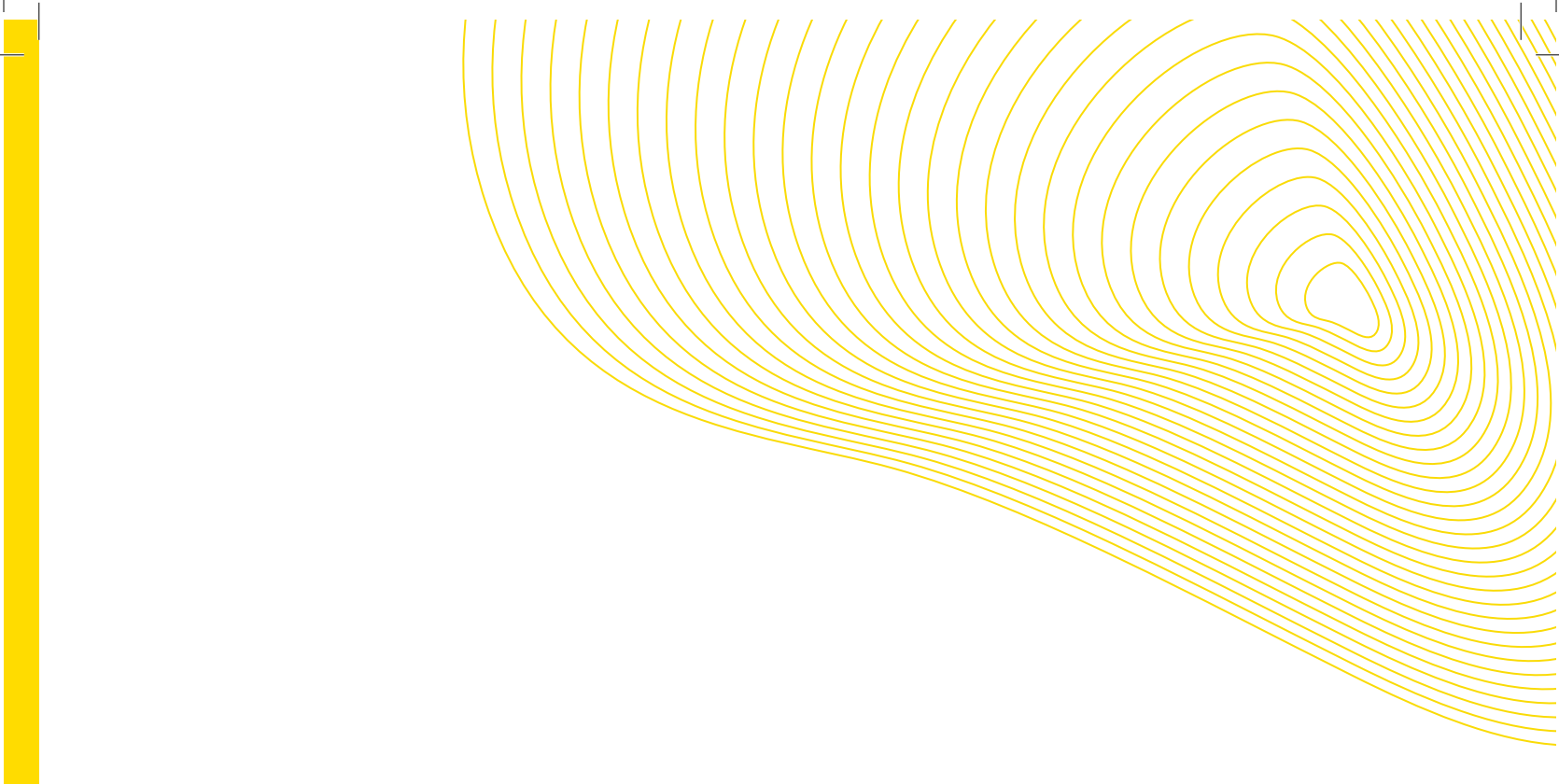
Case Study 1: Order fulfillment

Sangay came to Australia from Bhutan three months ago, together with his wife who's studying full time at a local university. He was very happy to have finally found a job and to start gaining that elusive "Australian experience." After working for a week in the online department of a local supermarket, he's not that excited anymore.

Prior to his first shift, Sangay attends the store for an induction where he spent most of the time in front of the computer going through modules to learn about his new job. By the end of the three hours, he has done about 35% of the required modules. The manager tells Sangay that he'll need to finish all the modules before he can get any casual shifts. At home, Sangay asks his wife to help him with the remaining modules because she has better command of English. All in all, he doesn't actually understand half of the things that he was supposed to learn.

On his first shift, he was assigned to buddy with Jessica, a seasoned online team member with three years' experience. Jessica spent 10 mins explaining the process and equipment to Sangay in the staging area which is the back dock. It is over 30o Celsius and the only thing between them and the scorching sun outside is a colourbond sheet. Jessica then takes Sanjay to the shop floor and shows him how she picks an order. This takes about 30 minutes, but she says she'd normally do that in half the time. Then she excuses herself because she's got a lot of orders to pick that day, so Sangay continues on by himself. Some items are not where they are supposed to be according to "the system". There are supposed to be six cans of ABC chili beef on the shelves, but he can only find two of the four he needs. He approaches a grocery team member for help about appropriate substitutions, and they decide to substitute baked beans.

For another order, he goes to deli for 200g of shaved ham. The deli team member is visibly annoyed as she was busy packing roast chicken and tells Sangay to come back and collect the ham in 15 minutes. When he returns the deli team member is still busy serving a string of customers while also continuing to pack the roast chickens. He then sees another online team member stepping into the deli to pick chicken skewers herself. He wonders if he should be doing this. There were lots of pictures of the deli in his induction training - but he hasn't been shown what to do or how, or when to do it.



On his next shift, Sangay hears the store manager ridiculing the online manager, during a store huddle, for having asked to direct new online orders to other stores the previous day. As Sangay wasn't there the previous day, he asks Jessica what happened and was told two online team members called in sick and nobody picked up those shifts. They tried getting help from other departments, but nobody came because there wasn't anyone else to help in those departments. Many customer orders were late, and the online manager stayed back past her finishing time to complete everything. The already busy front-end manager was asked to help pick orders, and everybody in the department ended up skipping rest breaks and taking reduced and late lunch breaks to make the delivery truck.

Apparently, the relationship between the service manager and online manager is also strained because online never respond to calls for help from the service area, and front-end team members often get abused by customers when the online team are late to respond to customers picking up orders. Sangay feels the tension in the store all day long.

When Sangay starts picking, he realises the picking trolley is wonky, so he has to apply more force and exertion to control the trolley. Halfway through picking the order, another fast order comes in and he has to rush through his current order to pick that one straight away as the third-party delivery driver is waiting already.

Because it's a rainy day, online orders have increased throughout the day. He is told repeatedly to go faster and is constantly reminded of how far behind the orders are and how many customers and drivers are waiting.

He is asked to do two hours of overtime and feels he can't turn it down because of all the unfinished work. He had to make his wife wait for him to pick her up from uni. He knows he won't be losing sleep tonight because his body is aching all over, already.

At the end of his shift, Sanjay's pick rate is just 160 items per hour, and he believes it's because of all the disruptions and because he can't find things on the shelves. There are many gaps, and products out the back, but he has no time to find those. He's worried about getting any shifts next week because he was told that the required pick rate is 220 items per hour in this store

Case Study 1

continued

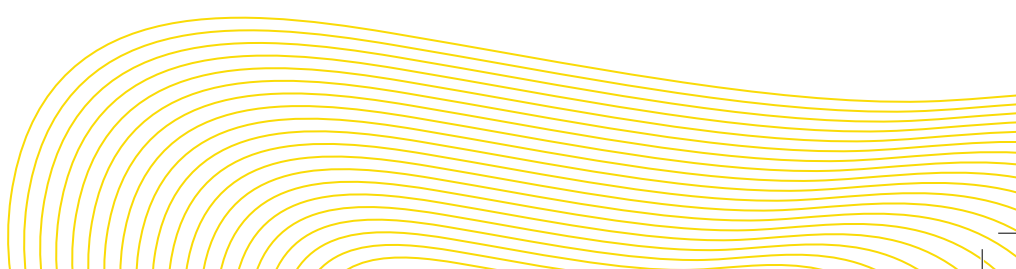
Case 1: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

The hazards identified in Case Study 2 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|--|--|
| Job demands | Demands of the work seem to have been increased by the lack of effective training to support understanding of the role and how to complete the work. For example, the time available to complete training, the language of the training, and its content (e.g. not covering important aspects of the tasks) increased the demands of the role. |
| Workload, work pace/timing and schedule of tasks | Workers are dealing with many unexpected rapid or urgent orders. |
| Job Control | Workers have little control over the timing of order picking, particularly given the rapid and urgent orders. |
| Poor interpersonal relationships and role conflict | Visible conflict between managers (e.g. relating to staffing), was distressing for both managers and workers. |
| Organisational and workplace culture | Ways of working that attempt to help limit the impact of understaffing by working through rest and meal breaks are demonstrated in the scenario. These rely on workers to stay back after end of shift and rushing tasks to reduce customer wait times. |
| Supervision and support | Inexperienced workers are operating with limited training and supervision / support. |
| Customer aggression/abuse | Workers experience customer abuse regarding delayed orders. |
| Physical work environment | High temperatures are experienced in the back dock, and poorly maintained equipment is present (e.g. trolley). |

Case 1: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|-------------|--|---|
| Job demands | Develop interactive online or in-person classroom style training, perhaps conducted in group-based sessions. | <p>Re-designing the training delivery format would help ensure the content is understood by new workers and is completed by the intended person.</p> <p>Interactive online or in person formats would create a richer learning environment; enabling participants to ask questions, seek clarifications and learn from the questions/responses raised by others, and could have additional benefits in creating a sense of belonging and identity among new workers.</p> <p>Re-designed training (in person or online) could also help demonstrate the organisation is committed to and values safety, as well as the importance of other topics covered in the training.</p> |



Case 1: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic (continued)

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---|---|--|
| Workload, pace/timing and schedule of tasks | Pause rapid/urgent orders, or send the rapid orders to other nearby stores, or arrange key hubs for rapid orders, whenever staffing levels fall below a threshold (e.g. 80%), or during other peak periods (e.g. in poor weather when these orders increase). | Pausing rapid/urgent orders will help reduce backlogs at critical times, ensuring the workload is more manageable, and that workload varies with available staffing levels. It also will ensure that workers are not pressured to miss breaks, working back or taking shortcuts which pose other risks to the business. These strategies may also assist in addressing the hazards of customer aggression/abuse and interpersonal relationships which are strained due to urgent orders not being fulfilled in a timely way. The ability to initiate practices to pause or transfer orders also can assist with improve levels of job control. |
| | Introduce and implement a policy of replacing absent workers (for both planned and unplanned absences), or have paid on-call employees on stand-by ready to cover shifts at short notice for areas with unpredictable workloads. | Replacing workers helps to achieve minimum safe staffing levels so workers are not exposed to excessive workloads and also helps to ensure that customer wait times are not unnecessarily increased. |
| | Limit re-assignment of workers from one department to another to 30-minute durations and limit the maximum number of reassignments per day. | Limiting the time period for which workers can assist in other departments will help ensure that adequate staffing in one department does not come at the expense of another, thereby minimising the negative effects of trying to spread available workers across multiple departments. A 30-minute reassignment provides time to make alternate arrangements, such as calling in a casual to replace the absent workers. |
| | Collect data to indicate when workers are reassigned to other departments so (e.g. staff login when changing roles/ departments). | Data on number, and timing of re-assignments can inform management expectations regarding how work is done with the available resources. When collected over time, trend data on re-assignments can inform future workload planning and support activities, e.g. planning to replace absent workers. |
| Workplace culture (related to working through breaks) | Arrange a tracking system to monitor that breaks are taken on schedule and produce an exception report to management at regular intervals. | Tracking missed breaks helps management identify the scale of a potential problem (inadequate resourcing, poor engagement etc), and incentivises managers and supervisors to ensure all team members can, and do, take their meal and rest breaks on schedule (as per the rules for (un)paid leave set out in the relevant award or enterprise agreement). |
| Supervision and support | Enable new team members to spend a minimum number of shifts in one (or two) departments only. | This strategy helps support new workers in developing and consolidating skills in their roles, ensuring they gain experience and confidence, before starting to take on other roles and responsibilities. |
| Customer aggression/abuse | Supply a "training" and department badge to new workers. | Indicating which workers are in training, and in which department they are based can help customers appreciate that they are less experienced and eliminate unrealistic performance expectations. |
| Physical work environment | Strategies to reduce the temperature of the back dock area, including for example, insulation, ventilation, and air conditioning or installation of fans. | These redesigns aim to reduce physical stressors and fatigue, making it easier for workers to perform their duties safely, with increased alertness and comfort and the potential for reduced psychological stressors. |
| | Review routine maintenance schedules to ensure equipment is adequately maintained and functional. | Relatively simple and inexpensive (yet effective) changes to physical environments can not only improve operating efficiency and reduce the potential for injury, but helps communicate that safety and wellbeing is valued, the hard work of workers is appreciated, and so improve work culture, commitment and motivation. |

Case Study 2: Customer service areas

It is late on a Friday afternoon in the Service area of a retail store that is located in a Shopping Centre, and it is extremely busy. One worker is assigned to the self-serve checkouts. Another worker is assigned to express lane, smoke shop and customer service, and only one more worker is assigned to a normal "big" register. There are queues forming.

The self-serve worker, Samantha, is trying to watch twelve Self Service Checkouts which all are being used at the moment. She is trying to direct customers to the correct machines, clear the baskets, watch people process their transactions, and help customers with issues with their machines, but the queue is just getting longer, and people are becoming impatient. The Company tells workers their safety is most important as customer abuse and violence is high in the store, but they also have guidelines which require workers to try and stop theft by "helping" all customers with their transactions and that they should intervene proactively when there are errors in customer transactions. There is also a new requirement which requires workers to check the products scanned by the customer if they believe the customer made a mistake. This makes her feel very nervous because she thinks she will get abused if she checks the customer's receipt – and the people in the line might abuse her too because of the time it takes.

She turns around from helping one lady who had items in her trolley which the system failed to recognise as they were from other stores in the Centre. The lady says to her as she finishes checking that the items in her trolley were purchased earlier from other stores. The customer says to Samantha aggressively, "Are you accusing me of stealing?" Samantha says, "No, of course not. The system is very sensitive," But the customer is fuming and clearly seems to think Samantha thinks she is a thief and is offended. Samantha quickly leaves before getting into an argument.

But then she sees two other customers waiting for her too, on checkouts 5 and 8. She also notices a familiar couple on checkout 11 who are known to staff to often fail to scan products and for getting aggressive when asked about it. They look at her angrily as they recognise her too. She already feels tense, and this is making it worse. She is unsure which task to do first, but she really does not want to approach them.

The customer on 5 says in a sarcastic tone as she approaches, "How long do I have to wait to get some help around here? I've been waiting ten minutes." She chuckles and rolls her eyes. The other customer next to her looks upset too and has a child hanging out her trolley crying loudly. Samantha can see she has a lot of other shopping from outside the store in her trolley too which she also has to check, or she will get in trouble.



Samantha tries to think quickly about who can help her, but then she remembers someone called in sick from grocery today and all the departments are stretched to cover each other's breaks. She is in fact waiting for the service manager to come back from her own overdue break. Samantha feels she is losing concentration and is feeling very tired, but she has to keep going.

The worker in the smoke shop, Gillian, is trying to serve on the express lane and serve in the smoke shop at the same time, but there is a queue forming here too. There are also three partner delivery drivers waiting at the service area asking for online orders they are meant to pick up. One complains loudly that they have been waiting for 15 minutes. The worker also notices someone pushing through the front with a trolley full of shopping without paying. Gillian knows she is meant to note this down, but then the customer at the smoke shop starts complaining loudly too that he has been waiting 5 minutes to be served. They are all looking at her like she is stupid, and she feels embarrassed.

Harry, who is on the "big" registers, has been working on the registers for a couple of hours today. His register work is meant to be rotated so he scans from his right to his left for a couple of hours and then switches to a register where is scanning from his left to right for a couple of hours. He is also meant to be taken off the bigger registers after his break to work on self-serve but because everyone is too busy, and he is too busy, he has been forgotten and he hasn't been rotated at all. The time has flown by, and Harry starts to feel that pain through his right forearm again.

His back is also hurting from bending over as he is quite tall. The counter is too short, and he finds if he works for too long in a stretch it starts hurting. As a casual, Harry is conscious he needs to maintain the required scan rate of items if he wants to keep getting rostered shifts. He was told he should be scanning a certain number of items an hour by now as he is past his probationary period. He is struggling today.

Harry did try and talk to the manager briefly about these issues, as this is affecting his scan rate, but the manager said they have no hours elsewhere and was not very sympathetic. The manager said he should toughen up - maybe go to the gym - and that he would get used to it. Harry has just been told the store is having a renovation of the front, but no one has asked him for his opinion about the changes and he doesn't feel like he will have an opportunity to contribute.

Case Study 2

continued

Case 2: Hazards identified

The hazards identified in Case Study 2 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|---|---|
| Customer aggression / abuse | Aggression and incivility from multiple customers escalates quickly, as customers wait in long lines. |
| Workload, pace/timing and schedule of tasks | Multiple tasks have to be completed at the same time in a fast-paced work environment. Workers also face rapid change and new technology requirements. The high workloads mean workers are regularly unable to take breaks. |
| Physical work environment | Poor physical layout (e.g. low surfaces) creates potential ergonomic hazards which may interact with other psychosocial hazards in the scenario. |
| Role conflict | Workers are asked to prevent theft while not accusing customers of wrongdoing, but also to ensure a good customer experience by helping customers. At the same time, they are told to keep themselves safe when there is a potential for customer abuse and violence, but also to approach and help those suspected of stealing or who may be having trouble with the self-service registers. |
| Supervision and support | A lack of support for managers, supervisors and team members is evident in the scenario. This includes support in regards to the reporting of issues, and when seeking to contribute to workplace improvements. |

Case 2: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Customer aggression / abuse | Provide estimated wait times on a display at the front of the store, along with more space and clearer areas for queuing. | Long lines and multiple queues can create confusion, (e.g. for self-check and express lane). Clear space for queues can reduce confusion and prevent customers running into each other as they shop and wait. Providing information on where to queue, and waiting times, increases customer control, and manages expectations, making wait times seem more manageable. |
| | Implement and communicate a policy of preventing/responding to customer abuse. This may include procedures such as referring threats of violence and online abuse to police. | A clear policy communicates actions required of workers and customers, as well as expectations of what actions will be taken when elements of the policy are breached. |
| | Design and implement a reporting system for easy and reliable capture of all customer abuse incidents, without fear of retribution, and in a manner that facilitates follow up and accountability. | A clear policy communicates actions required of workers and customers, as well as expectations of what actions will be taken when elements of the policy are breached. |
| | Implement an alert system that enables workers to indicate when they need to shift to other tasks and/or be replaced with other workers (e.g. time to step away to recuperate after an event/incident or in anticipation of abuse/violence). | Ensuring all events are reported, including lower-level incidences of abuse and incivility, will ensure the business is aware of what that workers are experiencing, and can monitor and inform risk management strategies and the continual improvement of risk controls. This is consistent with risk management practice. |
| | Reshape features of the physical environment to ensure workers have greater visibility/line of sight of each other and feel less isolated (e.g. in service areas). | A system that enables workers to indicate when they need to task shift can enable workers to deescalate conflict and rally support to prevent exposure to aggression & violence, and at the same time improve job control and reduce anxiety leading to better decision making and customer service. |

Case Study 2

continued

Case 2: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic (continued)

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---|---|---|
| Workload, pace/timing and schedule of tasks | Consider whether staffing levels are adequate to ensure safe staffing for the service area as a whole. This could involve revisiting rosters to ensure there is more than one worker assigned in peak periods and that rosters provide cover for designated meal and rest breaks so these could be taken on schedule. | Visibility helps team members feel supported and allows help to be obtained more readily when an incident occurs. |
| Physical work environment | Consult workers regarding potential changes to the work environment and equipment, including potential adaptations for different body sizes, abilities and limitations (e.g. height adjustable register(s) or having a dedicated register for taller people) | Consultation (as opposed to briefing) means asking workers for their input and listening to their views and perspectives. This should assist in more effective re-design of equipment and environments and builds perceptions of supervision and support, boosting overall morale and retention. This re-design may also help prevent a potential workplace injury. |
| | Rotate workers between equipment/tasks while equipment re-design is being pursued. | Rotating workers can reduce exposure to harmful environments/equipment, while more sustainable solutions are pursued. Rotating workers also allows workers to experience other tasks and roles in their area more regularly so when others are away they will be more familiar with these tasks which will enable them to recall how to do them more easily. |
| | Re-skill and/or reassign workers who may have injuries or find existing equipment is impacting their health. | Re-skilling workers will enable them to complete tasks that are likely to be less harmful to them and provide opportunities for professional development. |

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---|--|--|
| Role conflict | Develop a series of case examples, in consultation with workers, which identify and clarify areas of concern regarding these conflicting priorities in customer service areas and outline clear expectations and priorities. | <p>Discussion and feedback at a local level, preferably face to face, enables questions and areas of role conflict to be talked through and clarified, and helps workers feel supported and heard, which can also improve workers morale and retention.</p> <p>Clear examples of what to prioritise in particular situations may assist staff to deal with seemingly incompatible expectations in their role, by having consistent information to guide their actions in particular circumstances, and also guide managers in responding to the decisions made by workers.</p> |
| Supervision and managerial support | Review roster in practices for both workers and managers with a focus on scheduling adequate time for all required tasks and breaks. | Effective rosters that accommodate all tasks and breaks enables both managers and workers to manage their time, take their scheduled breaks, and reduce the risk of industrial action, and enable managers to provide more support at peak times when needed. This, in turn, helps manage issues of workload and customer abuse and violence across the team. |

Case Study 3: Back dock operations

Jackie has been working in the fill team (3pm-11pm, 5 nights a week) for 5 years and is very efficient at breaking down and processing the load. However, over the last 5 years as online shopping has taken off, the back dock area has become more and more congested with the presence of extra workers and equipment from the online team, and this slows the breaking down of the load. The store is well over 30 years old, and online shopping did not exist when it was built. The site needs refurbishment to address these concerns.

The back dock area is a high traffic area now because of online and because it's also a thoroughfare for workers to get to the lunchroom. The online desk and equipment have been squeezed into a space in the far corner. In the other corner is a small, caged area that is not large enough to house the equipment used by the new cleaning team. Their equipment constantly spills outside the caged area, including a large floor sweeper that has to be near the power source for charging, which is outside the cage.

Trucks pull up to the back dock to unload their loads whilst online delivery trucks try to use the smaller dock area. It's not ideal but they have to make it work. Every night seems like a recipe for disaster, with multiple workers now using this space differently, yet simultaneously.

The site is also only equipped to take 1.8 metre loads because the pallet racking is not high enough to put higher loads under them. But the Distribution Centre (DC) keeps sending loads higher than 1.8 meters to the store, so the back dock area gets even more congested because the loads can't be stored away. Jackie tries to focus on splitting these higher pallets first and putting the smaller 1.8 metre pallets away under the racking to create more space but finds she just can't move quick enough.

Multiple times, Jackie has reported to management that the high loads don't fit in the racking. The Company's solution was to send a platform ladder that is meant to make it safer to remove the top-most layers of these very high loads before moving these loads into the racking. But the back dock is far too congested to use this over-sized platform



ladder. Furthermore, workers can't keep three points of contact, coming down a ladder with a box in their hands, and there is no one to help. Jackie sometimes feels unsteady on the ladder and that she might drop something especially when she is trying to get things done quickly.

Jackie is also meant to supervise the younger workers as they break the load. She notices one young guy who is new trying to move a heavy load by himself with a manual pallet jack. She thinks it must be more than a tonne and is way too heavy for a manual pallet jack. But he hasn't been trained yet on the electric pallet jack. There hasn't been time. Jackie stops him; luckily. He could have been badly hurt, just like Fred was last year when the electric pallet jack was broken.

It seems impossible for Jackie to break down the load quickly enough to make space for the next round of online orders. This will bring all the online workers who have been collecting customer orders into the back dock space. They also really need the replenishment team to work hard tonight to put the stock away on the shelves as not all the load is going to fit in the racking and then there will be a new load tomorrow too. She hopes none of the replenishment team call in sick again as the boss has again told the Duty Manager not to replace sickies. But then Jackie finds out two people have called in sick, and they won't be replaced. Jackie's heart sinks. She doesn't want another 1am finish, only to get in trouble the next day for doing unauthorised overtime.

Sometimes it's easier to leave the work undone, but then the day team have to deal with those issues on top of their scheduled work. That means the night team come into an even bigger mess in the afternoon which puts them even further behind too. It just snowballs.

Case Study 3

continued

Case 3: Hazards identified

The hazards identified in Case Study 3 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|---|---|
| Physical work environment | <p>Restricted space is being used for multiple purposes, and by multiple roles. The high-risk workspace is also a thoroughfare. Poor layout affects the timing of task completion, and influences workloads.</p> <p>These risks are exacerbated by inappropriate equipment for the space and task (e.g. the platform ladder).</p> |
| Change management | <p>As online orders have grown, and as the business has brought cleaning services inhouse, arrangements for the required space and resources to support this form of stock and asset management have not been reviewed and updated to meet operational and safety objectives.</p> <p>Sending high loads which do not fit into the existing store racking without consulting or checking the capacity of the racking or if there is sufficient space or workers to process these loads, results in not only increased workload but also creates other hazards, such as hazardous manual tasks (manual handling).</p> |
| Workload, pace/timing and schedule of tasks | <p>Not being able to complete tasks as scheduled means that tasks and workloads snowball during and across shifts. Workloads are also increased by staffing issues (availability), and the layout of the dock.</p> |
| Job control | <p>Each group of workers has poor control over their work environment/shared space impacting their ability to manage their work, as well as having a lack of control over the arrival and packaging of deliveries.</p> |
| Supervision and support | <p>Poor supervision, support and training is shown by the inadequately trained young worker who uses the incorrect equipment for a heavy load. The task of training and supporting people in addition to many other urgent tasks and responsibilities also forms part of the high workloads experienced.</p> |



Case 1: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---|--|---|
| Physical work environment | Re-arrange layout of back dock, with consultation and participation of workers. | A new layout of the dock may assist with multiple teams needing to use the space at the same time. Involving workers in how the space should be laid out helps increase job control and demonstrates that the workers are trusted and valued. |
| | Create a designated walk-path across the back dock to the lunchroom. | A designated walk path ensures workers are not exposed to risks related to interactions with pallet jacks and other equipment. |
| | Remove shelf of racking to allow for 1.8m+ (over-height) items to be stored. | Changes to shelf racking mean that larger materials can be stored without needed to be immediately broken down, which will also help to address workload issues. |
| Change management | Improve methods of communication for shifts, so team members understand the tasks that have been completed, or that are remaining (e.g. through team huddles, or a shift communications diary). | As there are several roles using the space, consulting all groups together can help ensure issues are acknowledged and needs are met if/when the space is redesigned, thus managing change more effectively. |
| | Include worker representation from the various roles/shifts using this area on health and safety committees | Given the multiple purposes for which the workspace is used, improving communication about work in shared spaces helps avoid confusion, and enables tasks to be completed more efficiently. Effective consultation and communication will also increase job control and help improve morale. |
| Workload, pace/timing and schedule of tasks | Review and change where possible the times that tasks occur so they do not overlap. For example, the organisation could arrange for loads to come in earlier, so they are broken down and put into pallet racking before the online team or cleaners arrive. | A basic task analysis of the back dock area will inform any revisions to scheduling of tasks for each department and may assist multiple teams by reducing the need to use the space at the same time. This should improve congestion and allow work to be done more quickly as there will be less double handling and moving and waiting for others to get out of the way. It should also reduce potential for interdepartmental conflict caused by one department having to wait for another, thus also potentially improving morale and interdepartmental relationships. |
| Supervision and support | Establish mentoring and or shadowing systems to help support training on high risk or dangerous tasks or equipment. Develop a system of adequate supervision over a new worker's first few shifts to monitor and support the effectiveness of any training and reduce the other tasks of those who are training or supporting them. | Mentoring and shadowing helps monitor that workers are learning how to do things safely and correctly (usually most efficiently) from the commencement of employment. This can lead to fewer accidents and near misses, and improved workloads across the team, as new workers come up to speed sooner. These strategies will also help to monitor the effectiveness of any training provided and assist with improvement to training materials and practices. |

Case study 4: Fast Food

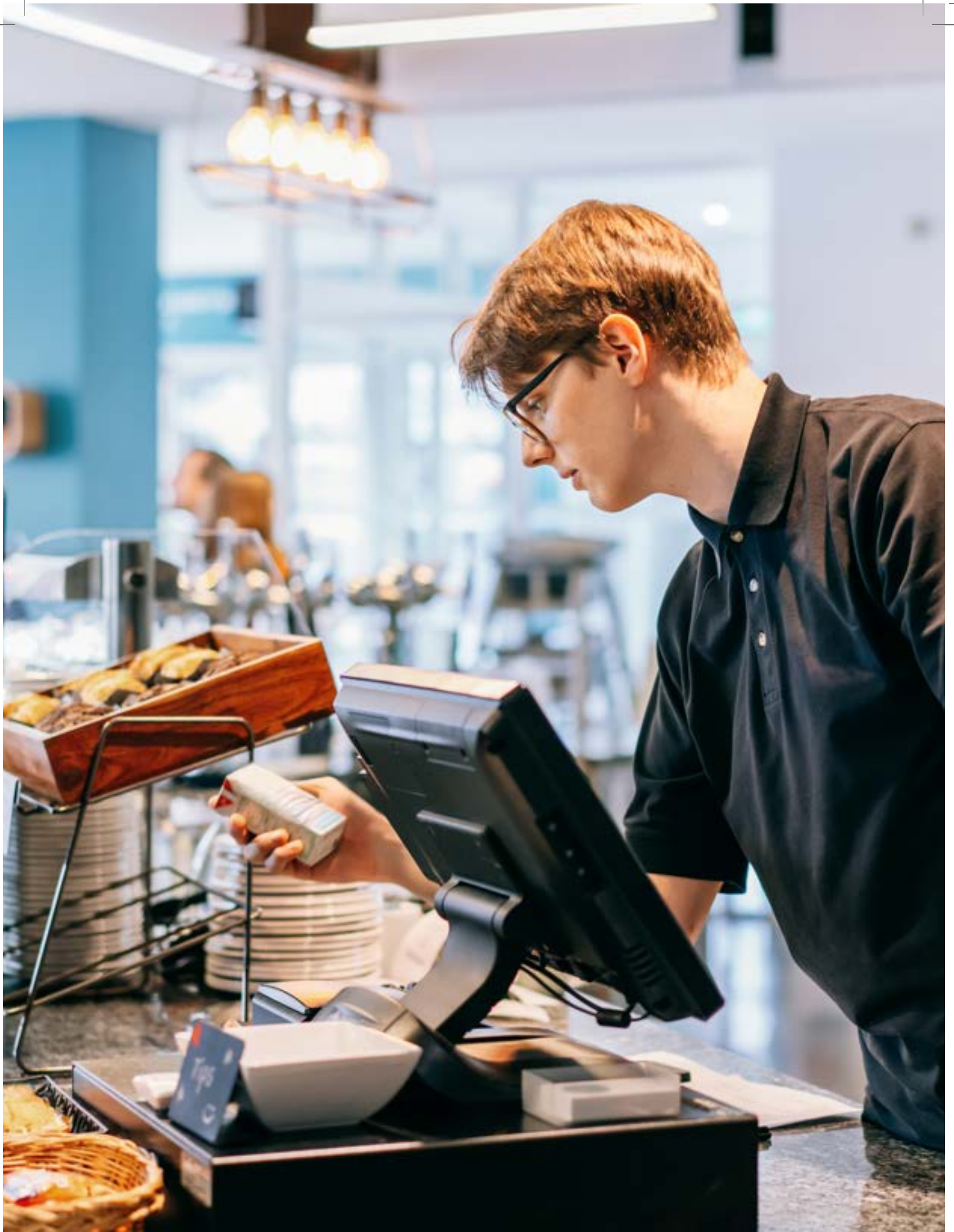
At a fast-food restaurant located in a regional town, the young workers are calling in sick, as they're scared about what could happen on their next shift. The restaurant is co-located with a petrol station, and they operate 24/7. It is the only place in town serving food 24/7 so it gets busy late at night. On weekends it is especially busy, with people coming in to eat in the early hours after being at the local pubs and entertainment precinct. The petrol station next door has been held up twice in the last 6 months, and the petrol station now has a night window to ensure workers safety. Jayden, a young supervisor, is worried that now the petrol station is better protected, the fast-food restaurant may become a target of robberies.

Jayden is only 21 and sometimes supervises 2 or 3 younger workers during night shifts. It is common for the restaurant manager to schedule night shifts with just young trainees and only one or two supervisors who are also young. They are expected to train and supervise the younger workers, even though they're not paid or appropriately trained for this role. It becomes hard to fill these shifts as some of the young workers don't want to work at this time, and others have parents who don't allow them to work at times they feel are unsafe. This creates problems for the supervisors, who have to not only train and supervise workers but also try to fill shifts at the last minute.

Jayden and several other team members have received multiple threats and abusive comments, written on the feedback portal that customers are asked to complete on their receipts, as well as on social media. These include names of workers, comments on their appearance and social lives. Jayden made a complaint about the comments directed at himself to the restaurant manager, Adam, and was told that an investigation would be conducted, but other than ignoring the feedback, nothing has been done and it still seems to be happening. Jayden has been trying to remove messages on social media himself, trying to protect his co-workers from seeing the abuse.

Jayden and some of the other workers who have made complaints seem to have been assigned the more "unwanted tasks" such as the cleaning of the bathrooms and working in the tiny non-air-conditioned drive thru cubicle taking orders. Many of the workers are scared they'll get the same kinds of tasks, so they go along with whatever the restaurant manager says and does, even if they feel uncomfortable. Recently Jayden has disturbingly seen Adam rub the back of two of the young girls. The girls have told Jayden they think it's really creepy, but don't want to say anything because Adam might retaliate against them.





Case Study 4

continued

Case 4: Hazards identified

The hazards identified in case Study 4 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|---|---|
| Remote / isolated work | The store is in a regional location and operates 24/7. |
| Exposure to traumatic events or traumatic materials | The adjoining business has been robbed, leading workers to be concerned about their own security given the 24-hour nature of their workplace. |
| Procedural justice | Issues raised by workers are not followed up or actioned. Staff who raise concerns are given unfavourable tasks. |
| Customer aggression/abuse | Exposure to threatening materials and abuse from customers on the workplace feedback portal and on social media. |
| Sexual Harassment and interpersonal relationships | Inappropriate contact between manager and workers. |
| Workload, pace/timing and schedule of tasks | Several workers are unavailable for night shifts, in part given concerns over personal security, creating a higher workload for others. |
| Role conflict | Some workers have several roles, as supervisors, trainers, workers. |
| Supervision and support | Young workers are assigned to supervise other younger workers and trainees at night, without the support of more experienced/mature workers or supervisors. |

Case 4: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

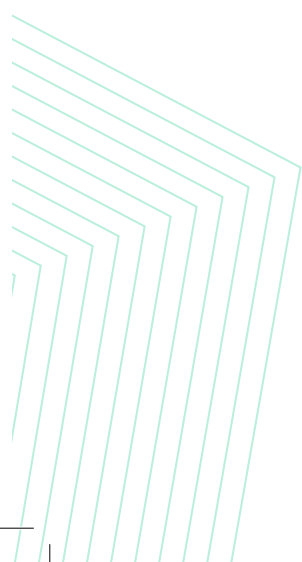
| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|--|--|---|
| Remote/ Isolated work (and exposure to traumatic events) | Limit store access to “drive through service only” after a specified time at night. | These strategies would assist with the safety and security of the site, and have several other benefits, including lowering concern about exposure to traumatic events, and potentially also addressing staffing issues, as parents may become more willing to allow young workers to work weekends and nights. |
| | Implement communication systems (e.g. via headset) for team members to have access to support at all times. | |
| | Provide additional security during periods of concern (e.g. weekends, overnight). | |
| | Add physical barriers between customers and staff-only areas. | |
| Procedural justice | Development / reinforcement of procedural justice policies and associated training and competency development. | Procedural fairness should be expected by all workers and is foundational to achieving a positive work culture and ensuring robust reporting of negative events. |
| | Develop and implement training to raise awareness and encourage reporting of safety and/or other events. May include an external (confidential) line of reporting. | Safe, robust and trusted reporting systems are essential to identifying and resolving safety issues and any potential issues of concern. |
| | Roster both favourable and unfavourable tasks, with all workers included on the roster in a fair and transparent manner, on a rotating basis. | Assigning unfavourable tasks to people who raise concerns is not only unfair and poor procedural justice but can build a culture of silence and resentment. Ensuring all workers perform the less favourable tasks, helps foster trust and teamwork. |

Case 4: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic (continued)

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Customer aggression/abuse | Assign a role (e.g. senior managers) to review customer feed-back daily and remove abusive/inappropriate comments. This may include having comments read and filtered before they are publicly displayed online. Trends may be analysed over time (e.g. regarding frequency, timing, nature, responses to events / in store promotions. etc) | <p>Regular review of this information by senior staff, could mean that that junior/younger workers are less likely to be exposed to harmful material, and that any emerging issues can be addressed quickly.</p> <p>Examining trends in abusive comments can help identify ways to reduce harmful feedback (e.g. locking the portal to customers on weekends after 6pm) and highlight ways to address underlying quality of service and resourcing triggers that may impact negative comments and feedback from customers.</p> |
| | Implement and communicate policy and procedures regarding customer abuse, including to customers in the feedback portal. The policy may include procedures to refer threats of violence and online abuse to police. | A clear policy communicates expectations and required actions, along with likely consequences. Indicating on the feedback tool that abuse is not tolerated and will be reported to police may reduce the incidence and may encourage customers to be more polite and respectful to workers. |



| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---|---|---|
| Sexual Harassment and interpersonal relationships | Review policies and procedures for reporting and investigating sexual and other types of worker harassment, to ensure they are undertaken with procedural fairness, that barriers to reporting are addressed (e.g. through anonymity and confidentiality as appropriate) and that outcomes will be acted upon as necessary. | Regular reviews of reporting and investigation procedures, including staff consultation, is necessary to ensure policies and procedures are appropriate for the work context, the relevant regulations in place, and for the kinds of behaviours that need to be reported. Regular updates to reporting and investigation processes helps ensure that staff know the procedures exist, what might happen when they are used, and that the processes can be trusted. Up to date, relevant and comprehensive procedures in this area can help demonstrate commitment to prevention of such behaviours. |
| | Develop and/or review discrimination and harassment prevention (re) training for all workers members, including managers and senior workers. | Training on harassment should be a basic part of workplace training and onboarding, and the materials should be regularly monitored and updated, and training refreshed to ensure ongoing competency. |
| | Facilitate regular oversight, supervision, and contact/ communication with vulnerable workers by more senior leaders/ managers and also provide regular opportunities for direct communication (e.g. by senior staff working later shifts from time to time). | Opportunities for informal feedback, consultation and support between workers with different levels of experience can help younger workers access the benefits of experience, address underlying concerns, and help workers feel listened to. Overall, this can help improve culture, commitment and morale. |
| Role conflict | (Re)define job roles for duty managers, supervisors, trainers, and any other role. For example, having a dedicated staff trainer for training workers as opposed to having a supervisor train staff. | This helps ensure clarity of responsibilities and assist with ensuring competency for the relevant roles. This may also help with providing further support and supervision for workers, as it will be clear which roles to contact for various issues. A dedicated trainer role avoids the conflict of other tasks like supervising other workers, dealing with customer complaints and operational issues while training. A dedicated trainer role also provides professional development opportunities for some workers. |



Case Study 5: Fashion retail



In a small fashion shop located on a busy high street in a regional area, Emily works 24 hours per week (Monday-Wednesday) as a part time manager. Staffing levels mean she is working alone in the store the majority of the time. Emily believes this creates an extremely unsafe workplace.

Staffing levels are so low it is impossible for her to complete the tasks she is given. The storeroom is always so over-stocked with excess stock that boxes are often stored in some of the change rooms. This has created trip hazards for the more elderly customers who come into the store.

Emily does her best to suggest items to customers, and to find the right sizes and stock in the disorganised storeroom, but the state of it means it's really difficult to find things. She has raised the issue of the storeroom and suggested that they should be focusing on regular re-supply of items that seem to appeal to her older clientele, who are more of her regulars, but nothing has been done to take her suggestions on board.

Team members keep quitting and the store is always so overstocked and under-staffed that workers feel overwhelmed dealing with the pressures and conditions on their own. Emily is working a minimum of two hours of overtime a day, unpaid, just to keep the store functioning. This has been going on for months now. It is often difficult for her to take any breaks. Sometimes it is hard to even go to the toilet, and when she does, it's a 400m walk to the staff toilets in the shopping precinct, and they're often not clean. She is told she can close the store if she needs to leave, but that seems impossible because there is always a customer browsing inside and customers won't just come back in 10 minutes - they just go to the competitor nearby. This means Emily will lose sales and she feels the pressure to sell stock.

The store has a daily sales target and most time when the phone rings in store, Emily is questioned about whether sales targets are being met, sometimes multiple times a day from different external managers. The expectations from the Company and upper management are unreasonable for a small regional store. There is a lot of pressure from Diane, the Group Manager, to make sales and to get all the other work done each day. Emily has started to get anxious each time the phone rings, expecting more condescending comments from Diane. She seems to be running a daily checklist with Emily, asking if she has completed the most minor tasks, and criticising her if they are not done. Emily knows a call will come at least once a day, but it could be at any time, which is another reason why Emily is reluctant to take breaks. Diane won't call on Emily's mobile, as company policy states you cannot use your personal mobile during work hours.

The pressure only gets worse whenever store visits by managers are happening as expectations to demonstrate sales go through the roof with no additional help. During a recent store visit, the Group management were all in store, but none of them helped Emily when 4 separate customers all came in at once. She felt unsupported and that they were just there to watch and judge her performance.

The impact on her mental health has now caused her to be off work and pursuing a Workcover claim for a psychological injury.

Case Study 5

continued

Case 5: Hazards identified

The hazards identified in case Study 4 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|--|--|
| Job control | Workers have no control over either the volume or choices of stock delivered to the store. |
| Workers also have no control over the store sales targets, which they feel are unreasonable. | The adjoining business has been robbed, leading workers to be concerned about their own security given the 24-hour nature of their workplace. |
| Supervision and support | Feedback from workers about stock orders is not acknowledged or acted on by managers. |
| Supervisors don't help with tasks when on site or help to find solutions to problems. | Exposure to threatening materials and abuse from customers on the workplace feedback portal and on social media. |
| Bullying | Workers face repeated phone calls, micromanagement, and condescending comments which may meet the criteria to be classified as workplace bullying (repeated, unreasonable behaviour that creates a risk to health and safety). |
| Job demands | There is significant pressure to achieve high sales targets. The targets are unreasonable due largely to the poor alignment between stock on hand and the needs and preferences of the store's clientele. |
| Isolated work | Workers have a lack of support/backup, as they often work alone, and are unable to take appropriate breaks. |
| Physical work environment | Excess stock can't all be stored in available storeroom space and is creating slip, trip and fall hazards. |

Case 5: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Job control | Implement a system to allow local workers to have a role in ordering for their store so that the right stock is on hand at the right time. | <p>This strategy enables workers to have input into decision making in relation to stock, within the boundaries set by the organisation.</p> <p>This strategy may also assist with an absence of professional development opportunities and help with succession planning. It would also improve stock management and allow workers to feel heard and improve morale.</p> |
| Supervision and support | <p>Implement structured group meetings (e.g. once per week online or by phone) and including managers on the call.</p> <p>Allocate a specific time during the day to respond to manager's email requests and queries.</p> | Regular, more structured opportunities for communication can improve consultation about stock and other tasks, improve efficiency and provide opportunities for more effective follow up on actions and accountability. Over time, meetings would help clarify roles and responsibilities, so supervisors have particular roles when in store. This could help improve teamwork and morale. |
| Bullying | Restrict amount of phone calls from managers by investigating other methods for obtaining timely access to sales data (e.g. an online, real-time stock/sales information system). | This re-design would reduce the need for frequent phone calls, reducing interruptions and anxiety about perceived micromanagement, and enable workers to better plan their time and tasks. A daily phone call could be used more productively, such as to providing support. |
| Job demands | <p>Set agreed monthly sales targets, in consultation with workers.</p> <p>Allocate time in the workload for administrative tasks such as emails, stock orders and meetings.</p> | Improved consultation in setting sales targets will help the organisation identify which items to stock in particular stores, increasing sales in those stores, and reducing pressure on workers to stock and sell items that do not appeal to the clientele in the local area. Changes to stock ordering, and restricting calls about sales targets from numerous managers as discussed above, may also assist with reducing job demands. |
| Isolated work | <p>Restructure rosters to ensure an hour or more shift cross-over cover every day.</p> <hr/> <p>Consider adding additional part-time workers for busier periods.</p> <p>Where there are multiple stores in an area, consider sharing a worker who may float between stores to cover breaks etc.</p> | <p>Having a second worker in store, even for part of the shift, would enable workers to take their breaks without needing to close the store.</p> <hr/> <p>It would also help build team morale and a sense of working together. It would also allow workers to check in and support each other with queries and difficulties.</p> |
| Physical work environment | <p>Improve stock management, in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > ensuring stock levels do not exceed available storage space, and > implementing a stock management information system to ensure stock is organised and easy to locate when required. <p>Redesign space (if possible) to separate storage and customer change rooms or arrange access offsite storage.</p> | <p>Reducing excess volumes of unwanted (low sales) stock and removing excess stock from change rooms reduces risk of injury for both customers and workers.</p> <p>Information on available stock will also help reduce workload (in terms of time taken to find stock), improve customer satisfaction, and potentially benefit sales.</p> |

Case Study 6: Liquor sales

At a small liquor store at the front of a medium size shopping mall, works Miguel, a 56-year-old worker with 8 years' experience in retail. He has been working in this liquor store for five years. He often works alone and is concerned about his safety.

Miguel often has to try and complete various tasks by himself such as changing tickets, filling and moving stock and sometimes reconfiguring displays and signage, whilst also watching for theft and serving customers. The constant interruptions and distractions mean he often finds he has to rush to complete everything.

He was also assaulted at work in 2013. The assault left Miguel hospitalised for 3 weeks and, ever since, he gets afraid when people act aggressively towards him. He also encounters customer abuse regularly; usually swearing and sometimes even physical personal threats. People often come into the store to try to steal liquor; sometimes groups of people come in and steal. Though they don't physically hurt Miguel, and sometimes don't even talk to him, Miguel finds this frightening, and it makes him feel very nervous all the time. Miguel just lets the stock go as per the company policy and tries to not react to the abuse and violence, but he feels very emotionally drained because of all of this.

Last week Miguel was racially abused by a customer, who had stolen a can of bourbon and physically threatened him by leaning over the counter and making aggressive gestures. As he was working alone in the store at the time, Miguel called the police. When they arrived, they asked where the offender went. Miguel went out of the store and pointed the police to where he thought the offender could be found, as the man often just went around the corner from the store. The police couldn't find the man there and left.

On returning to the store, Miguel reported the incident to the shift manager by phone. Soon after, the offender returned to the store and was again threatening him, behaving very aggressively and was coming closer into his physical space.

Miguel grabbed what was close to hand - a bottle of spirits - to defend himself. The



offender left and was soon arrested by the police, as they had remained close by and were alerted to the offender's return by a member of the public.

Miguel couldn't sleep all night, with flashbacks due to the incident. The next day Miguel's manager called Miguel about what happened. His manager asked how he is but seemed to be much more concerned with what happened; particularly the fact Miguel momentarily left the store.

Miguel's manager offered Miguel the phone number for the company's Employee Assistance Program, again.

A week later Miguel is asked to have a formal meeting with his manager about what had happened. It's the first time he has seen and talked to his manager properly since the event. Their shifts only overlap by half an hour and usually the manager is trying to complete tasks he struggles to complete when working alone, so they don't usually get a chance to talk properly.

A few days later Miguel is told he has been given a first and final warning based on four company findings:

1. He called 000 in front of the offender, thereby escalating the situation;
2. He left the store to follow the offender and show the police where the offender went;
3. The store was left unsecured and there was a customer in the store; and
4. He grabbed a potential weapon (bottle of spirits), escalating the situation.

Miguel has never had a warning at work before. On the days between the meetings, and after hearing the outcome, he has been experiencing nausea when thinking about work and has continued to find it difficult to sleep. When he receives the warning, he feels both angry, hurt and deflated. He's no longer sure retail is right for him and isn't sure what job he is capable of doing now.

Case Study 6

continued

Case 6: Hazards identified

The hazards identified in case Study 6 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|----------------------------|--|
| Isolated work | Workers are alone in a retail environment which is often prone to theft and security concerns |
| Customer aggression/ abuse | The worker was exposed to aggression and racial abuse from customers. The impact was likely exacerbated by exposure to previous instances of aggression and abuse. |
| Role conflict | Workers in this environment perform a number of inherently conflicting tasks, such as stock replenishment at the back of the store where one can't see the front of the store, while also having to serve customers and watch for/reduce theft ("snatch and grabs") at the front of the store. |
| Supervision and support | There was a lack of discussion between the worker and store manager about the circumstances surrounding the incident, and a warning was issued based on company findings. There appears to be a lack of appreciation of the ongoing effects and cumulative trauma from previous events, or of the workload issues which create the high job demands outlined above. |

Case 6: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Isolated work | Adjust rosters to enable greater overlap of workers. | Rostering overlap would help provide more than one worker in store, providing support, and potentially also assisting with workload and role conflict issues that may arise. For example, this will allow for a worker to focus on watching the front of the store for theft and serve customers while another is restocking. |
| | Implement a system of check-ins between stores, perhaps including virtual hook ups with other stores. | Virtual check-ins with other stores would provide a sense of support and community among lone workers, as well as timely sources of support if/when violence and abuse occurs. This would allow team members to share ideas between stores and provide opportunities for regular communication where teams are small. |
| Customer aggression/abuse | Install duress alarm systems that go directly to mall security, or to a security firm that can provide rapid response and support. | Duress alarms that have a direct connection to a source of support are more effective in ensuring a timely response and reducing the risk of harm to which workers are exposed. A silent alarm/button would also avoid escalating the aggression being expressed by the customer. |
| | Install physical barriers between workers and customers. | Physical barriers can help prevent exposure to physical threat, including striking and spitting. |
| | Improve lines of sight so people outside the store can see in and the worker can see from the front of the store to the back more easily. | Increasing visibility contributes to reducing the isolation of the worker as others can see them. |
| Supervision and support | Develop procedures for dealing with instances of exposure to violence that go beyond employee assistance program referral. These may include prioritising time to allow discussion about the event, informal debriefing with colleagues; checking whether workers need time off; and conversations about how to help the worker feel less vulnerable. | Timely discussion and opportunities for debriefing may help employees to work through the experience, feel supported and have their experience validated by peers. These are in addition to accessing professional sources of help, as needed. This may also help reduce anxiety about being blamed. |
| | Develop and communicate clear procedures for investigations and making findings (e.g. opportunity to bring a support person; clarifying procedures and possible outcomes). | Clear procedures on investigations and possible outcomes helps provide a sense of control during the process, regardless of outcome. Effective discussions can also be useful to canvas potential changes to improve the safety and security of workers (and stock). |

Case Study 7: Hardware retail

Workers in a hardware store hear the call out over the PA system for assistance in the electrical section. The workers are aware the specialist for the area is not in today and are unsure if anyone else is capable of assisting. After 2 call outs over the PA, the customer requiring help is starting to become impatient. A supervisor then sends a worker Sam to go and help, stating "someone needs to do it".

Sam asks the customer what they need assistance with and the customer replies that their electrician asked them to come and get 20m of power cable. There are numerous types of cable available, and Sam doesn't know which one, so asks the customer, who snaps "that's your job, that's why you're here". Sam calls for the supervisor's assistance, and the customer aggressively scoffs "how much longer is this going to take now?"

Meanwhile, a vehicle parks in the timber yard outside, and the driver gets out leaving the car running. One of the workers, Luke, approaches the driver to inform them that, while they are able to park there, they must turn the car off because of the exhaust fumes it creates in the area. The driver replies "mate, my dog is in there, no way I'm turning the car off, do you know how hot it is?" Luke replies that it is the policy, and the driver just walks off. Luke goes and sees their supervisor, who says, "I don't have time to deal with that, it's fine don't worry about it". Luke can't help but feel that the Manager has been dismissive simply because it was raised by him. He has been feeling increasingly disrespected and undervalued by some of his coworkers, and many of the Managers, since his recent workplace injury.

Luke has 10 years of experience at TBC Hardware and recently injured his back while lifting a heavy product for a customer. This resulted in him being placed on restrictions by his doctor, which means he cannot lift over 2kgs, cannot work below hip height and cannot stand for longer than 45 minutes, before needing to change to a seated task. This has left him on light duties, such as working in the gatehouse of the timberyard checking vehicles coming in and out, ticketing, and doing returns of light stock items. Based on his injury, these duties are expected to continue for 6 months. Luke is finding this hard. Sometimes customers expect him to help lift items into their trucks and he has to get help. That takes time. He can tell that the customers wonder why he needs help. One of



the other team members came down the other day and made a big issue of how busy he was in front of the customer, and it made Luke feel bad about having to ask for help. A few times no one has responded to his calls, so he has ended up lifting things which were outside of his restrictions, just to move the line of cars along at the gatehouse.

Now that Luke is on light duties, some of his co-workers have decided they will offload the jobs they don't like onto him. There are also rumours going around that Luke is faking the injury, so he can do easier, more cushy jobs. All this chatter and gossip is creating extra stress on top of his injury, which not only impacts his job but his home life as well.

Before being injured Luke had a high degree of autonomy in his work. He was able to make decisions and manage his own workload. He was also seen as a subject matter expert in his field, and an expert on his branch of TBC, with most younger workers going to him for help and advice. Now on light duties and relegated to the gatehouse, he gets given repetitive and boring jobs. He's become increasingly frustrated, and, to some degree, the tasks he is doing makes him feel like he isn't contributing to the workplace.

Many of these assigned tasks are poorly thought out, or parts of other jobs meshed together to fill in his day. This has led to more tension with other employees, as parts of the jobs they do have been given to Luke, meaning there is more start-stop work happening, rather than a continuous flow. Out in the gatehouse, he no longer gets to work with his regular trade clients, many of whom he has come to know well over the last 10 years at TBC and from his volunteer work in the local community, and he no longer provides mentoring and advice to the younger workers. He then goes home only to feel even more useless there, not being able to mow his own lawn, or help out with care of his young child.

Luke has raised his concerns with management and they have been dismissive, expressing to him that based on his injury there isn't anything more they can do and that this is the nature of retail work in hardware.

Case Study 7

continued

Case 7: Hazards identified

The hazards identified in case Study 7 include:

| Hazard type | Description/comments |
|---------------------------|---|
| Job content and demands | <p>The injured worker is not assigned tasks for which they hold skills and experience or sufficient physical capacity. Instead, the demands of the work assigned post-injury are such that work is now repetitive and boring, compared to previous tasks which may have utilised expertise and enabled engagement with customers and co-workers.</p> <p>Workers may lack of knowledge/training to perform tasks, but are assigned to undertake them anyway, when there are no specialist staff available.</p> |
| Job control | <p>The assignment of light duties following injury may mean a worker's level of autonomy is reduced. Workers are given tasks and instructions by multiple people, with the more interesting, meaningful or enjoyable tasks often reassigned to others.</p> |
| Supervision and support | <p>Policy exists but is not consistently enforced (e.g. regarding customers turning off engines).</p> <p>Concerns raised about policy breaches are dismissed (e.g. when customers refuse to comply).</p> |
| Customer aggression/abuse | <p>Exposure to abuse and aggression (including microaggressions) from customers when their expectations are not met (e.g. when specialist assistance is not available).</p> |
| Bullying | <p>Bullying may be reflected in workers gossiping, social isolation, and isolated from contributing meaningfully to the workplace (e.g. by helping others).</p> |

Case 7: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Job content and demands | Understand skill sets of available team members rostered for each shift, perhaps organised by a high-level categorisation of skills. | Individual consultation with workers helps identify what knowledge they have and understand what they could/would do. This will help plan for a complement of skill sets across shifts. |
| | Implement targeted cross training or mentoring of workers. | Cross-training or mentoring/shadowing workers can help spread specialist skills and ensure that expertise is available when customers need it. This can assist with reducing customer frustration and abuse. Mentoring or shadowing of workers with highly developed skills can help improve team culture and cooperation. |
| | Targeted recruitment of additional team members, as required. | Recruit workers who have specialist knowledge and skills but are looking for part time or less physically demanding roles, (e.g. older workers, injured/disabled tradespersons) who can help add to the in-store expertise, while also developing a flexible workforce. |
| | Match staffing levels and specialist skills for the time of day / week, and the service level advertised. This may include advertising particular specialist services being available at particular times (e.g. on a board at the front entrance identifying which services are currently available in store). | Companies set expectations as to the levels of customer service – they need to resource adequately to ensure they can deliver on those expectations. Important to implement realistic staffing and organisation of work. Matching the availability of specialist skills to times when they are most likely needed can help ensure customers are well serviced, reducing role conflict, workload and the potential for customer abuse (e.g. more support for “DIY” customers shopping on weekends and during the day compared to professional tradespersons who tend to shop in early mornings or evenings and need less specialist advice and support). In addition to providing better customer service, these kinds of strategies help manage customer expectations. |
| | Develop a database of answers to common or frequently asked customer questions or problems. This could be accessed when specialists aren’t available. The database could be developed with participation of workers in each area, and there is potential for injured workers with subject matter expertise to help develop this as a form of light duties. | Developing this database addresses multiple issues, providing meaningful engaging work for injured workers, as well as assisting when team members with specialist skills may be unavailable or busy helping other customers. It could assist in reducing the likelihood of customer abuse and violence, provide better customer service, and help upskill team members with diverse skills and experience. |

Case 7: Examples of work re-design strategies and change logic (continued)

| Hazard(s) | Work redesign strategy | Change logic and comments |
|--|---|--|
| Job content, job demands (injured worker) | <p>Regular monitoring of the progress of the return-to-work plan, with opportunities for feedback from the injured worker and relevant parties on work duties.</p> | <p>Regular consultation on progress with light duties can help develop a sense of control over recovery, reinforce contributions to the workplace and progress that is being made.</p> |
| | <p>Consider which work tasks that the worker previously undertook and found a sense of achievement in are compatible with the light duty restrictions, or where parts of those tasks may still be able to be performed.</p> | <p>Including all relevant parties can also help with improving workplace support and relationships.</p> <p>Aligning light duties with previous tasks and roles helps maintain a sense of contribution for the injured worker, keeping them connected with their workgroup and role, and feeling that they are contributing rather than being assigned menial tasks.</p> |
| | <p>Develop procedures for communicating information about light duties and work limitations to co-workers and supervisors when workers are on RTW plans - mindful of confidentiality constraints / preferences and after obtaining consent from the injured worker. This may embed information regarding the impact of injury (e.g. featuring personal anecdotes from real workers) within basic training about workplace hazards</p> | <p>Communication about light duties may help to foster social support for the injured worker, through ensuring co-workers understand the RTW plan. This may also assist with the plan not being violated and contribute to a more collaborative team environment and culture.</p> <p>Including training on the impact of hazards, and the experience of injury, may serve to both improve the culture around the treatment of injured workers, and increase hazard and injury awareness.</p> |
| Supervision and support | <p>Review and collaboratively develop (e.g. through toolbox talks) an approach to the problem of customers violating policy in the workplace (e.g. leaving engine on), and collaboratively develop mechanisms for enforcement.</p> | <p>Working together to develop procedures will increase ownership, and likely effectiveness of the new procedure / policy.</p> <p>Collaboration between workers and supervisors will also help communicate and reinforce support and indicate that worker concerns have been listened to and acted upon.</p> |

4. Discussion



Summary of hazards and re-design strategies

The seven case studies developed in this project highlighted a range of common psychosocial hazards experienced in retail environments. Workers from those retail environments helped identify potential ways of re-designing systems of work to reduce exposure to psychosocial hazards. Consistent with the overlapping elements of the work re-design model (see [Figure 2](#)), these strategies included re-designing work using, for example:

- > **procedural and policy changes**
(e.g. stopping or transferring urgent orders at busy times; ensuring particular roles were included in consultative committees; setting and communicating clear procedures for investigations),
- > **changes to task timing, staffing and support**
(e.g. ensuring breaks are taken on schedule; providing specific levels of service at different times, ensuring appropriate staffing levels for all required tasks, opportunities for support from other workers and supervisors),
- > **equipment and environment re-designs**
(e.g. re-allocating spaces used for tasks; providing duress alarms; storing equipment/stock in different locations, timely maintenance of equipment).

Many of the proposed re-designs responded to concerns about high workloads, time pressure, isolation and poor levels of support; all of which underscored the need for safe levels of staffing - a common theme across the cases. Re-design strategies developed by the workshop participants deliberately sought to look beyond staff numbers to identify the specific hazard(s) of concern and then raise a range of initiatives that could address the sources of harm rather than simply calling for increased headcount.

Illustrating how hazards can co-occur and influence one another, re-designs recognised that failure to address one hazard can snowball to create or exacerbate other hazards. [Case 4](#) was a good example. Hazards that created potential exposure to safety and security risks (location, hours of operation and potential for robbery/assault by members of the public), then led to

operational challenges (reduced worker availability for night and weekend shifts) that created higher workloads for those rostered on, most of whom were young and inexperienced.

As a result, not every hazard in every case study led to a re-design strategy that addressed it directly. Instead, some hazards are managed through a re-design that focused primarily on a different hazard. In [Case 5](#) for example, a set time each day for phone calls and administrative work would not only help address perceived harassment and micro-management, but also reduce constant work interruptions and enable workers to take toilet breaks without fearing a missed call from managers.

Conversely, a complement of re-design strategies will usually be necessary to address issues of concern. In this project we aimed to showcase a wide variety of potential strategies that respond to each workplace context, and in doing so, demonstrate ideas that could be adopted or adapted for other contexts. Therefore, it is possible to add further re-designs to those suggested in the case studies. For example, in [Case 2](#), training and development for managers might also help address, in part, issues of poor supervision and support. However, generic skill development training for managers and supervisors was not included as a re-design strategy here because regular professional development should be implemented as part of 'business as usual' (BAU). Training can also support the implementation of work re-design strategies that change how work is done. However, the risk of highlighting training as a stand-alone strategy can mean that it becomes the only "re-design" implemented because it is often perceived as cheap and easy compared to other, far more effective work re-designs.

Finally, given hazards co-occur and interact with one another (WHS Regulation, Codes of Practice, ISO45003), many of the proposed re-designs constitute relatively small changes that should be considered to manage a broad range of physical and psychosocial risks to health safety and wellbeing. Mature work health and safety systems likely already reflect many of the proposed work strategies identified in this project, where they are relevant to their context.

Issues common across the case studies

Appropriate staffing is a key baseline intervention for psychosocial risks in retail. More workers would have reduced workload pressure across most cases (e.g. in online order filling in [Case 1](#); in the self-check area of [Case 2](#); in the fashion retail environment of [Case 5](#)). Scenarios in some cases just needed more workers on hand at particular times (e.g. overlapping or staggered rosters to ensure coverage for staff breaks) or required workers with more experience (e.g. to support young workers in vulnerable situations in [Case 4](#)) or with particular skills or expertise (e.g. to facilitate better debriefing in [Case 6](#), or workers with specialist expertise in [Case 7](#)).

While ensuring worker availability is a basic re-design strategy, the need to consult with those workers in a meaningful way was another common theme highlighted across the cases. This was particularly highlighted in [Case 2](#), where workers experiencing difficulties with physical layout didn't feel heard, and in [Case 3](#) where organisational change management failed to identify and address the challenges for multiple teams using the same limited space. Consultation remains a core workplace health and safety tool for achieving meaningful improvements to work systems. Genuine consultation, consistent with the available guidance on consultation (e.g. SafeWork NSW 2022), should be used when developing any work-redesign strategy, or any other part of risk management processes.

Issues specific to particular case studies


Several of the case studies highlight generic concerns relating to safety management, and the management of psychosocial risks.



[Case 1](#) reflects on the issue of **provision of training**, its nature and quality, particularly given the backgrounds and skill sets of workers. The worker in [Case 1](#) is an immigrant and has noted difficulty with some of the training content, which makes him reliant on others to complete the training needed to attain shifts. Basic principles in WHS practice include making training materials available in formats suitable for the intended users, which is also part of ensuring the training is valid and effective to meet its objectives. Some of the proposed re-designs for this case take this into account in proposing re-formulation of the training offerings.

Cases 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 each reflect how the **physical environment** is an important consideration in relation to psychosocial hazards and risks. While this relationship is sometimes confusing, and people think that psychosocial hazards are divorced from physical environment and equipment, the interactions in these cases make the links clear. Dealing with environments with a foreseeable risk of physical injury can induce anxiety, and being unable to voice concerns about injury prevention or work re-design through effective consultation processes can make workers feel they have no control and reduce perceptions of trust. Physical environments that restrict the way work is done, including its timing, as per [Case 3](#), can also create workload pressures and anxiety about potential injuries.


Multiskilling (or "cross skilling") of workers was raised during workshop discussion of [Case 2](#), as a strategy that may assist with staffing challenges, however participants emphasised it must be implemented appropriately. While multiskilling offers professional development and career advancement and provides options to support staffing gaps due to planned leave, poor consultation and poor management of multiskilled workers can see them moved continuously around the store, not contributing to their substantive role, and potentially becoming over-whelmed with the disparate

range of tasks they are now instructed to apply their skills to, often at short notice. These observations highlight how the implementation of otherwise beneficial work re-designs need careful planning during the design phase, and need to be monitored and reviewed over time, with ongoing consultation and adjustments as appropriate.


A further issue discussed at length in the workshop was around **breaks and managers having the time they needed to provide supervision and support** to other workers. This prompted discussion about the need for safe staffing levels that allow breaks to be accommodated for all workers, including managers and supervisors. This is necessary to enable task completion, rest and effective service delivery. In particular, [Case 2](#)  talks about managers taking breaks and workshop participants noted the expectations that managers cover meal breaks for other team members. The notion of managers needing time in their shift to be able to also provide support (e.g. instruction, feedback, informal training, mentorship) and deal with unforeseen challenges that arise was also discussed as part of ensuring not only the right amount of workers but recognising the dynamic task shifting that is required in managerial roles.

[Case 4](#)  and [6](#)  reflect **issues related to age** – with young workers in fast food outlets and older workers in liquor retail sector. Particular groups of workers may have vulnerabilities that need to be accommodated in work health and safety management systems. This is also related to workers' **experience** (or lack thereof), and the need to recognise and design systems of work

that accommodate the level of work experience they currently possess. Also important, is consideration of previous work experiences and traumas (e.g. customer interactions/thefts), and the previous policy and procedure requirements they may have been subject to. For example, in relation to theft and customer violence, workers may have had to deal with a range of different policy expectations over time (e.g. preventing theft, protecting stock, protecting oneself), and as a result may have a variety of natural instinctive responses to theft or threats of violence. These cases also highlight issues in **procedural fairness and organisational justice** and serve as a reminder that psychosocial hazards can extend beyond a particular “incident” into the post-incident response and subsequent work practices. Clear, transparent processes for dealing with abuse and misconduct, including regular updates on progress, and opportunities to support workers, should be implemented, following appropriate consultation.

Similarly, [Case 7](#)  showcased an example of a worker **returning to work following an injury**. Psychosocial hazards that may arise in the return-to-work process must also be identified and managed. They should be expected to arise, as the work system has fundamentally changed, both for the injured worker, and those around them. While outcomes for those returning to work following psychological injury are generally known to be poor (Wyatt & Lane, 2019), exposure to further hazards for those returning with any kind of injury also need to be anticipated and addressed with improved design of return-to-work practices (see AS/ISO45003: 2021).

Using the case studies to implement work re-redesigns for psychosocial risks

When considering the implementation of any re-design strategies noted in this report, it is important to apply the principles of risk management. Each re-design strategy was proposed for a **particular context** (the case study), and likely makes some assumptions about the **broader work context** in which that case study existed. As part of a basic risk management process (see [Figure 1](#) ) , organisations should actively understand the internal and external contexts, and identify hazards as they play out in their business, with their workers, considering their work tasks, objectives locations, skills etc.

The case studies developed in this project could be used by organisations in a number of ways. Importantly, any re-design strategies that are considered should also be developed in consultation with those who will actually do the work (and others involved in any change), and implementation of the re-design should be monitored and evaluated, like any other risk control. It may be useful for organisations to consider scenarios in their operations that appear similar to the case studies in this report, and collaboratively develop potential re-design strategies, which could be consulted on, and piloted.

Suggestions as to how organisations could use the case studies and associated materials include using them to explore, for example:

> Organisation-level psychosocial risk identification and risk management planning

- Senior managers could engage in a process of reflection on relevant case studies, and identify which hazards are similar, which re-designs may work for their organisation, and/or whether there are other elements of the scenarios or proposed re-designs that could be amended to make them more relevant.

> Team development activities

- WHS team meetings or toolbox talks could focus on discussing one or more cases for the purpose of learning, generating discussion about hazards and controls or consulting to identify potential re-designs relevant to the specific workplace and workers.
- WHS committees make recommendations on which re-design strategies are potentially relevant, could be further considered or need to be prioritised. This includes consideration of how work-redesign is reflected in the organisations health and safety management system.

> Participative risk control development strategies

- Workgroups could choose the case study/studies most relevant to their work, and participatively re-work the case scenarios to be directly relevant to their work. Then follow the same approach, identifying the hazards, appropriately adapted re-design strategies and change logic.

> Auditing, monitoring and improving existing risk control strategies.


- Organisations could look at the broad set of re-design strategies used across the seven case studies and assess the extent to which the strategies they tend to use in their organisation are of a similar nature (i.e. changing ways of working), and then identify plans for improvement.

Conclusion

This project developed a range of case studies based on real experiences in the retail sector which highlighted the experience of psychosocial hazards. Safe levels of appropriately trained workers and proper resourcing to support the assigned tasks was a recurring theme throughout the discussions as was the need for genuine consultation on work with workers. These outcomes were strongly consistent with the safety concerns of retail workers that had been identified in the 2023 SDA member survey.

Appropriate staffing and rostering were key risk controls that can assist in addressing psychosocial hazards in retail. The retail workers participating in the workshop assisted in the development of work re-design strategies which could assist in the elimination and minimisation of exposure to these and other hazards. The re-design strategies comprised changes to the timing of tasks, types of tasks performed, the policies, processes and systems that influenced these tasks, the levels of staffing and support available, as well as changes to the physical environment. Organisations could use the case studies to initiate discussions about re-designing work in their own operations, which would engage workers in a participative approach to addressing psychosocial risks in their stores.

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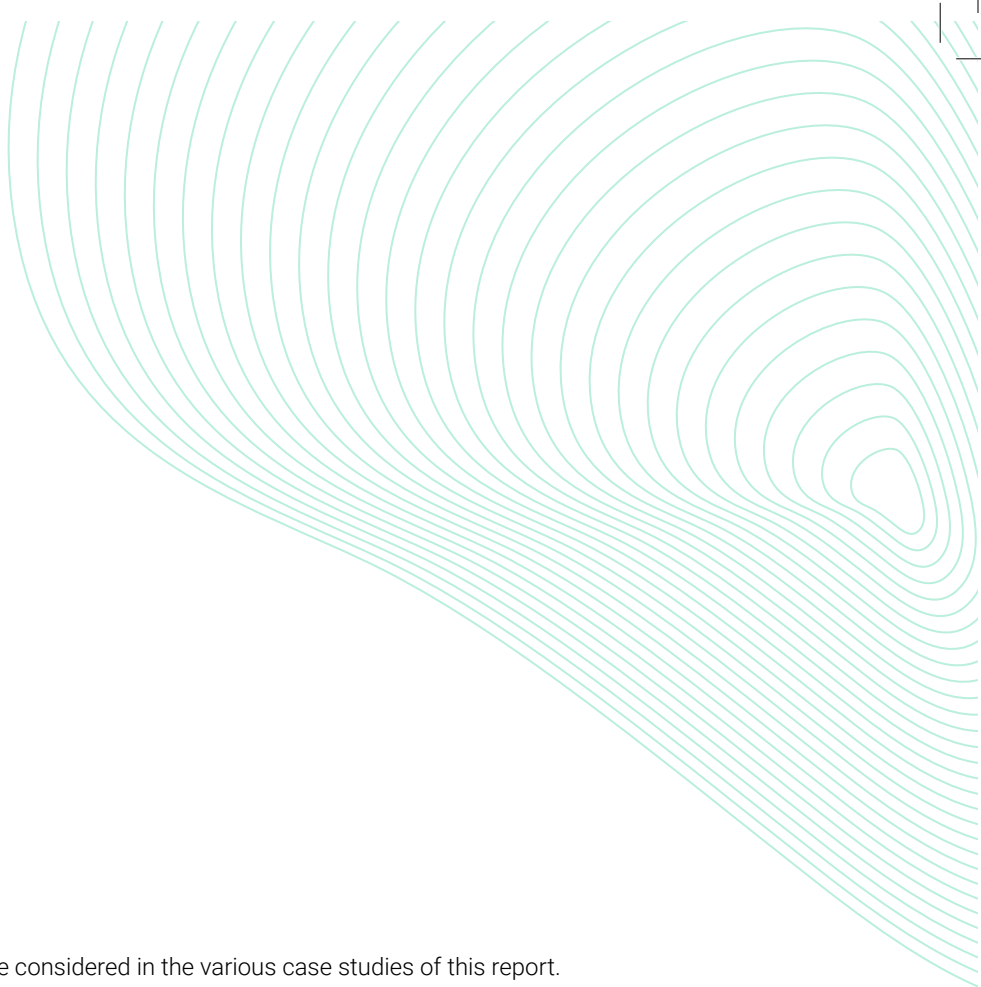
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6. Index of psychosocial hazards



This table identifies which psychosocial hazards are considered in the various case studies of this report.

| Psychosocial hazard | Case Study |
|---|---------------------|
| Job content and demands | 1, 5, 7 |
| Role conflict | 2, 4, 6 |
| Sexual Harassment | 4 |
| Job control and autonomy | 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 |
| Physical work environment | 1, 2, 3, 5 |
| Remote and/or isolated work | 4, 5, 6 |
| Change management | 3 |
| Supervision and support | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 |
| Workload, pace/timing, schedule of tasks | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Bullying | 5, 7 |
| Traumatic events/exposure to traumatic material | 4 |
| Procedural justice | 4 |

7. Appendices

Examples of psychosocial hazards




The following information was provided to participants before and during the workshop.

Psychosocial hazards are anything at work that may cause psychological or physical harm, including:

- > the way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised.
- > tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks.
- > the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments, and
- > social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

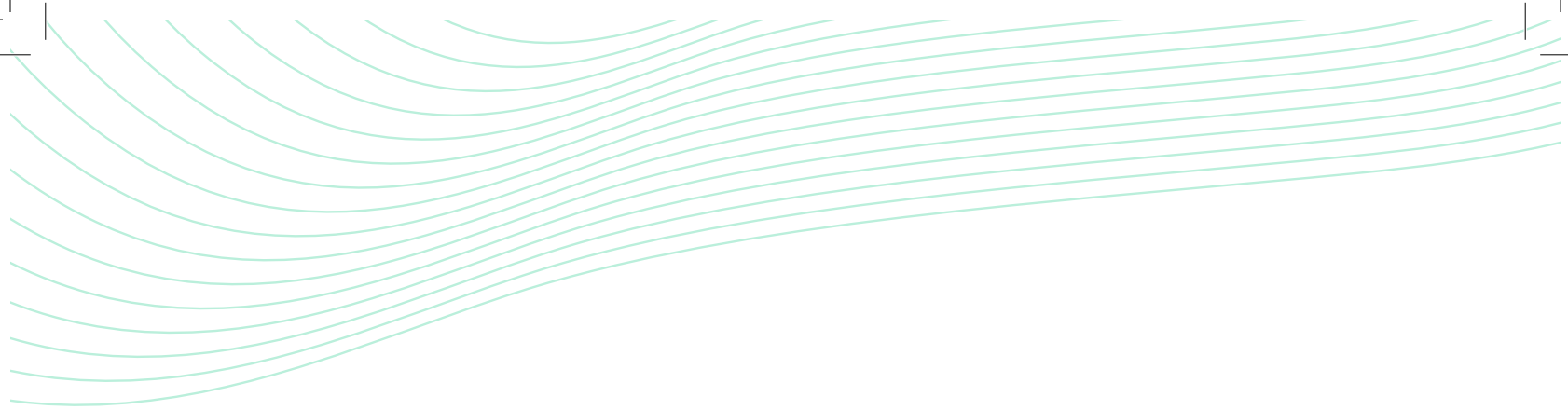
See below for examples.

Useful resources

- > Code of Practice – How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks (Safe Work Aust.)
- > NSW Code of Practice
safework.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/983353/Code-of-Practice_Managing-psychosocial-hazards.pdf 
- > QLD Code of Practice
worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/104857/managing-the-risk-of-psychosocial-hazards-at-work-code-of-practice.pdf 
- > WA Code of Practice
commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/code-practice-psychosocial-hazards-workplace 



| Psychosocial hazard | Examples |
|---|--|
| How work is organised | |
| Role overload (high workloads or job demands) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Too much to do in a set time > Unachievable task deadlines, expectations or responsibilities > Unpredictable shifts or hours of work, shift structures or rosters that do not allow adequate time for workers to recover > Multiple tasks that require rapid switching between each to complete > Sustained or frequent exposure to emotionally distressing situations > Tasks and decisions that are safety critical |
| Role underload (low workloads or job demands) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Too little to do > Highly repetitive or monotonous work |
| Exposure to traumatic events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Providing care to those experiencing a traumatic event > Listening to, viewing or reading descriptions about traumatic events > Experiencing, witnessing or investigating a serious near miss, injury or fatality |
| Role conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Conflicting priorities in a role |
| Role ambiguity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Uncertainty around roles, tenure, tasks, work schedules and standards |
| Job control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Little control in how work is done and when breaks can be taken > Lack of control over workload and/or work pace > Limited opportunity to participate in decision making > Limited opportunity to contribute to WHS and the way work is done |
| Remote or isolated work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Working in locations that are far from home, family, friends and usual support networks > Working alone (social or physical isolation) > Working in private homes (own or clients) |
| Poor organisational change consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lack of practical support to assist workers during transition periods > Prolonged or recurring restructuring > Poor consultation and/or communication about workplace changes |
| Job security and precarious work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Uncertainty about work availability > Possibility of redundancy > Low-paid or insecure employment > Lack of protection from labour law or social protection |



| Psychosocial hazard | Examples |
|--|---|
| Social factors at work | |
| Conflict or poor workplace relationships between workers and their supervisors and managers and co-workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Poor communication > Poor relationships between managers, supervisors, co-workers, > and clients or others that workers interact with > Harmful workplace behaviours |
| Poor support from supervisors and managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Poor communication > Poor information sharing > Lack of constructive feedback |
| Poor co-worker support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Inadequate information sharing > Inadequate advice and/or help for work tasks > Lack of social support |
| Workplace violence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Incidents involving an explicit or implied challenge to health, safety or well-being at work by co-workers, clients, visitors or others. > Physical, verbal, sexual or gender-based threats, abuse or assault |
| Bullying | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repeated unreasonable behaviours which can present a risk to health, safety and well-being at work. Some examples of these behaviours can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social or physical isolation • Assigning meaningless or unfavourable tasks • Name-calling • Insults and intimidation • Undermining behaviours • Undue public criticism • Withholding information or resources critical to do tasks • Malicious rumours or gossiping • Assigning impossible deadlines > See the National Guidelines on Workplace Bullying for further information |
| Harassment including sexual harassment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Unwanted, offensive intimidating behaviours by co-workers, clients, visitors or others around a person's race, religion, beliefs, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability > Efforts not recognised > Lack of opportunity for career development > Under-promotion > Over-promotion > Lack of opportunity for skill development |

| Psychosocial hazard | Examples |
|--|--|
| Inadequate reward and recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Efforts not recognised > Lack of opportunity for career development > Under-promotion > Over-promotion > Lack of opportunity for skill development |
| Poor procedural justice (processes for making decisions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Withholding information > Lack of fairness > Inconsistent and/or poor decision-making processes |
| Organisational / workgroup culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Low levels of support for problem-solving and personal development > Lack of definition of organisational objectives > Inconsistent application of policies and procedures > Unfair decision-making |
| Work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks | |
| Hazardous physical working environments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lack of space > Poor lighting > Poor air quality > Excessive noise |
| Lack of resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lack of tools, equipment or other resources to complete work tasks (e.g. a lack of appropriate PPE) > Lack of suitable tools or equipment > Poor equipment or tool maintenance |
| Extreme conditions or situations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Very high or very low temperatures > At a height |
| Unstable environments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Conflict zones > Disaster zones |

Sources: NSW Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work (2021) and ISO 45003 (2021)

See also the VTHC Psychosocial Hazards library:
ohsrep.org.au/psychosocial_hazard_library



SDA Workshop Outline

July 31, 2024 | 9.30am – 4.40pm

Workshop agenda

| | |
|--|--|
| Introductions and workshop outline | |
| Introduce psychosocial hazards | Overview of what psychological hazards are; include brief outline of survey results |
| Activity 1: Identifying psychosocial risks in case studies | Participants break into groups to consider their case study; identify and describe range of psychosocial hazards that may be present |
| Morning tea | |
| Introduce work re-design | Overview of work re-design concept and model; examples of re-design strategies, and change logic |
| Activity 2: Work re-design and change logic | Participants start to develop potential re-designs, with change logic |
| Lunch | |
| Activity 2 continued | |
| Activity 3: Peer swap | One group member swaps out to another group; checks case, hazard, controls and re-designs Together, refine and prioritise the proposed re-designs; challenge to find new re-design strategies |
| Refinement of responses | Prepare for showcase |
| Afternoon tea | |
| Showcase | Groups report back on the hazards, re-designs and change logic they have developed |
| General discussion and Q&A | |
| Close | |

Workshop Evaluation

Short surveys were used to gain feedback from participants at the workshops.

Figures A1 and A2 show results of ratings of confidence in identifying psychosocial risks and using work redesign to manage psychosocial risks before and after the workshop.



Figure A1. Ratings of confidence in identifying psychosocial risks, before and after the workshop



Figure A2. Ratings of confidence in using work re-design for managing psychosocial risks, before and after the workshop.

At the end of the workshop 100% of respondents rated the workshop as 4 or 5 stars out of 5. (30% and 70% respectively).

Comments received from participants are shown on the next page.

“

Thanks for a very interesting day and for the content we covered, I feel empowered to make a difference.

”

—
“This work is so important, thank you for your efforts. From personal experience, these risks are real & the effects are far reaching. I’m out of the industry as soon as I have finished trying to make it a little better for those who come after me but knowing what you are doing makes that a little easier to swallow.”

—
“I think it may just have been better to have been in a bigger room or have small breakout rooms as it was quite noisy.”

—
“The workshop was very enjoyable and created a valuable collaborative opportunity. Exploring personal store and role specific psychosocial hazards and scenarios and created solutions would also be quite beneficial for the members.”

—
“Like with most workshops the theory is there, it’s getting the companies to listen and try to come to resolutions that are beneficial to all, workers, customers and the business.”

—
“Really brilliant. Great speaker in Prof Carlo Really enjoyable day.”

—
“More of like this training.”

—
“Great course. Very informative.”

—
“What a wonderful experience today was. Looking forward to the developments in the future.”

—
“Retail need to realise 1 person can’t do 3 jobs. Extra staff is better service. Customer service is the key. Especially in the country areas. Workshop was very informative thank you.”

The page has a solid yellow background. A large white geometric shape, resembling a stylized house or a large arrow pointing right, is centered on the page. Inside this white shape, the text is placed. To the left of the white shape, there is a pattern of many thin, white, parallel lines that curve and converge towards the center, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Workshop photos

The images in the next three pages show some of the SDA members who participated in the workshop on July 31, 2024







