

# Committee information sheet

## Establishing an OHS Committee

- 1.1 An employer must, within two months of receiving a request, establish one or more health and safety committees when requested by:
  - A health and safety representative; or
  - 5 employees; or
  - A majority of the employees at any workplace.
- 1.2 The composition of a health and safety committee shall be determined by agreement between the employer, the health and safety representative and any interested employees. If requested by a union member, the union shall be consulted in relation to the composition of the committee. At least half of the members of the committee must be employees.
- 1.3 Employees can select their committee members by:
  - Holding an election for committee members. The same process for electing health and safety representatives can be used to elect worker representatives on the committee. A Committee Election Kit can be found in the Workers > Committees > Establishing a Committee section of our website: [www.workcover.com](http://www.workcover.com)
  - Choosing health and safety representatives as committee members. The OHS&W Act and Regulations provide that health and safety representatives should be encouraged to become committee members.
  - Combining health and safety representatives and employees where there are not enough health and safety representatives to fill all the employee vacancies on the committee(s) or where there are other employees with a strong interest in health and safety.
- 1.4 The structure of the committee should reflect the composition of the workforce it represents. Consideration should be given to different occupational groups, women and employees from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- 1.5 If at any time agreement cannot be reached on any matter relating to the establishment or composition of a health and safety committee, an interested party may refer the matter to the Industrial Commission to resolve the disagreement.

## Once the committee is established

- 2.1 The committee must appoint a member to chair meetings of the committee (who may hold office for up to 12 months).
- 2.2 The committee should appoint someone to take minutes of the meetings. The committee must retain those minutes for at least three years. The minute taker may or may not be a member of the committee.
- 2.3 Subject to the regulations, the proceedings of a health and safety committee shall be conducted in such manner as the committee may determine.
- 2.4 It is recommended that the committee develop and document terms of reference to ensure their effective operation. This is particularly important if there is more than one committee in an organisation, as the relationship between the committees needs to be clear to ensure that they do not recommend inconsistent policies or duplicate their work.



## The Terms of Reference should include

- 3.1 A quorum of the committee is 50% +1. At least half of the quorum must be employee representatives.
- 3.2 The term of office of a member of the committee is three years; and
  - A person is disqualified from acting, or continuing to act, as a member of the committee if
  - The person, being an employee, leaves his or her employment with the employer; or
  - The person is absent, without leave of the committee, for three or more consecutive meetings of the committee; or
  - The person discloses information obtained in the performance of his or her functions as a member of the committee in contravention of section 55 of the Act.
- 3.4 If a casual vacancy occurs in the membership of the committee:
  - If the former member was an employee—the remaining member or members who are employees may appoint a person to the vacancy for the balance of the term of the former member;
  - If the former member was not an employee—the employer may appoint a person to the vacancy for the balance of the term of the former member.
- 3.5 A meeting of a health and safety committee shall be held—
  - At least once every 3 months; or
  - On the request of at least half of the members of the committee; or
  - On the request of a health and safety representative; or
  - On the request of the employer.
- 3.6 The composition of a health and safety committee may be varied at any time by agreement between the employer, any relevant health and safety representative, and any interested employees who are within the responsibility of the committee.
- 3.7 Once the committee is established, the employer must complete and forward the Health and Safety Committee Information Form to WorkCover. The committee information form can be found in the Workers > Committees section of our website: [www.workcover.com](http://www.workcover.com)

The information contained in this document is drawn from the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act and Regulations and is provided as a guide only.

For further information contact the WorkCover Workplace Liaison Officers

Telephone: 8233 2036

Email: [wlo@workcover.com](mailto:wlo@workcover.com)



Committee information sheet  
swiY1A4T3CommitteeInfoSheet.doc | SafeWork Incentive  
Web version: Last updated 29 October 2002  
©2002 WorkCover Corporation of South Australia

### WorkCover Corporation of South Australia

100 Waymouth Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000  
PO Box 2668 Adelaide South Australia 5001

**Telephone** 13 18 55

**TTY calls** (for people who have a hearing / speech impairment)  
+61 8 8233 2574

**Interpreting & Translating Centre call**  
(please ask for WorkCover Corporation on 13 18 55)  
+61 8 8226 1990

**Email** [info@workcover.com](mailto:info@workcover.com)  
**Website** [www.workcover.com](http://www.workcover.com)

