

# OH&S Series

## Edition 2: OH&S Reps

### What is a Health and Safety Rep?

As per the Vic Occupational Health and Safety ACT 2004, Health and Safety representatives (HSR's) are workers that should be elected for the role, who represent health and safety interests of workers within their workgroup for a person conducting a business or undertaking (your employer).

- » The HSR role is no more than a 3 year term, however the HSR may be re-elected for subsequent terms
- » Employees within the work group will nominate representatives
- » The "workgroup" (DWG) will decide how the election process is run
- » If the amount of nominees equals the amount of vacant positions then they are deemed to be elected
- » The position can not be delegated
- » Employees may also choose to ask their UNION to run an election of HSRs for them
- » Consideration needs to be taken when nominating and electing the HSR for the designated work group, to ensure that employee's health and safety interests are adequately represented. See case study overpage.
- » Health and Safety Reps can request training and refresher courses to be paid by their employer, facilitated by a training provider of their (the HSR's) choice. The training course chosen must be approved by the authority (Worksafe). The employer must also pay for costs associated with the training i.e. Travel, accommodation

### The purpose of a HSR

- » Represent employees of the Designated Work Group (DWG) concerning health and safety
- » Monitor measures taken by the employer or employers in compliance with the OHS Act or regulations
- » Enquire into anything that poses or may pose a risk to the health or safety of employees of the DWG at the workplace and,
- » Attempt to resolve with the employer any issue concerning the health and safety of members of the DWG at the workplace.

### What is a Designated Work Group?

A Designated Work Group (DWG) is a group of workers who are grouped together for the purpose of electing a Health and Safety Representative. These workers may share similar health and safety concerns, locations, shift or employer.

An example of a designated work group can be a district (or part there of), a floor, a department or a team/s. Once a DWG is determined all staff are included within that group.

Any worker within a DWG can raise any issues or concerns to their designated health and Safety Representative.

Every worker has a right to talk to their HSR about any issues, concerns or hazards.

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### Case Study 1

Mary works at a branch within a district of 15 branches.

The 15 branches within the district make up the 'Designated Work Group' (DWG). Every staff member within the district are automatically part of the DWG.

The bank has notified the DWG that there is a vacancy for the role of a 'Health and Safety Rep' (HSR) and they have asked for nominations to fill the role.

Mary believed that only managers could fill the role of a HSR - but after researching the role and speaking with her Union, she identifies that any worker within the DWG can nominate and in fact, the DWG can often be better represented with a worker representative as the HSR.

Mary has often thought that the business could do better in protecting their employees from risks particularly psychological risks including stress.

After consideration and a want to improve the workplace now and for the future, Mary nominates herself for the 3 year term of HSR.

### Case Study 2

Nominations have closed for the HSR role.

Mary (a Personal banker) and a Branch Manager have nominated for the role of HSR.

As there are two nominees for the HSR role. An election must be conducted so that the workers within the DWG can elect their Health and Safety Rep.

The members of the DWG get to decide how the election is run. It is decided during an all branch teleconference that a secret ballot is to be conducted and ballots can be returned to the returning officer via the internal mail system. It is also decided that on the last day of the ballot - the two nominees will be present at the district office to open and count the ballots.

Mary won the ballot with more than half the votes for her. Now that Mary is the elected HSR - the first thing Mary decides to do is enrol herself into an approved training course.

The obligation is on the employer to pay costs for the course as well as Mary's usual wage whilst she attends the training.

Upon completion of the training course, Mary is well aware that her role is a serious and powerful position and returns to the workplace with a renewed faith that together as a group with her as their OHS Rep they can improve and Health and wellbeing of the workers within the DWG and maybe even the company.

### Who is YOUR Health and Safety Representative?

Name

Phone

Email