

Consultation & Communication

1. Purpose

This procedure outlines the steps to be followed to ensure suitable participation and consultation occurs at the workplace and how to effectively consult with workers who carry out work for the business and who are (or are likely to be) directly affected by a health and safety matter. It includes information on mechanisms to facilitate worker participation and representation.

This procedure applies to all workers of GVK Group including managers, supervisors and contractors.

2. Definitions

Consultation

The exchange of information allows duty holders to work together to plan and manage health and safety. The objective of consultation is to make sure everyone associated with the work has a shared understanding of what the risks are, which workers are affected and how the risks will be controlled.

Communication

The exchange of information and messages between individuals or groups within a professional setting. It includes face-to-face conversations, e-mails, chat messages, phone calls and other methods used to convey information in the workplace.

3. Responsibilities

GVK Group is responsible for ensuring that:

- All workers are trained and familiar with, have access to and participate in the Consultation and Communication Procedure.
- Those other persons, who are impacted by health and safety at GVK Group, such as other businesses, self-employed persons, and visitors, participate in consultation as required.
- Review of this Procedure is conducted as required.
- Maintaining formal, approved consultation mechanisms and records.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- Informing workers and others about the requirement to actively participate in, and follow this Procedure whilst working at GVK Group.
- Ensuring that all people are adequately trained in how to consult in the workplace.
- Conducting, and enabling, regular consultation with all workers and work groups.
- Maintaining records required by legislation relating to consultation.

4. Requirements

Consultation will take place directly with workers to identify and assess hazards, before and during implementation of risk controls, and whenever there are changes or new information that may affect health and safety of workers or other duty holders as relevant.

Consultation will be timely to ensure views are heard and workers/duty holders are provided with an opportunity to contribute to decision making as appropriate.

The process for consultation includes:

- In the first instance, workers who identify health and safety issues in the workplace, or who wish to communicate a health and safety issue, should contact their supervisor or manager. If it is not possible, or the worker feels uncomfortable raising a particular health or safety issue with their supervisor or manager, they should contact the state manager or their HSR or DHSR for assistance and/or consultation.
- The state manager will coordinate, manage, resolve, and document any formally raised WHS issues, in consultation with the HSR and relevant workers involved with the issue.
- Records of staff meetings will include set agenda items for health and safety. This provides regular opportunities for workers to raise any health and safety concerns.
- GVK Group will ensure effective communication and consultation with other duty holders (such as contractors) as relevant for the tasks undertaken at this workplace. All efforts will be made to identify hazards, consult with duty holders, cooperate and co-ordinate with duty holders to ensure health and safety. This may include a documented process or simply having a discussion with contractor personnel to suitably plan tasks and identify health and safety risks together.

When consultation will occur

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must consult with workers when:

- identifying hazards and assessing risks to health and safety arising from the work carried out or to be carried out,
- making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks,
- making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of workers,
- proposing changes that may affect the health or safety of your workers, and
- making decisions about procedures for consulting with workers; resolving health or safety issues at the workplace; monitoring health of your workers; monitoring the conditions at the workplace under your management or control and providing information and training for your workers.

Regular consultation is better than consulting only as issues arise on a case-by-case basis because it allows for early identification and to promptly fix potential problems.

Nature of consultation

Consultation requires that:

- relevant work health and safety information is shared with workers,
- workers are given a reasonable opportunity to express their views and to raise health or safety issues,
- workers are given a reasonable opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process relating to the health and safety matter,
- the views of workers are taken into account,
- workers are advised of the outcome of any consultation in a timely manner, and
- if the workers are represented by a health and safety representative, consultation must include that representative.

Workers are encouraged to:

- ask questions about health and safety,
- raise concerns and report problems,
- make safety recommendations, and
- be part of the problem-solving process.

Consultation may not always result in agreement between GVK Group, workers or HSRs.

5. Health and Safety Representatives (HSR)

Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) are elected to represent workers on health and safety matters and have responsibilities under WHS legislation.

GVK Group senior management, in consultation with employees, will determine and establish work groups and hold open elections within each workgroup for the position of health and safety representatives (HSRs) and deputy health and safety representatives (DHSRs) (as required). All workers in the workgroup are entitled to elect one or more HSRs and deputy HSRs for a three-year period.

Where health and safety representatives have been elected, they must always be included in consultation affecting, or likely to affect, the health and safety of members of their work group. The HSR's and DHSRs will communicate their decisions with their workgroup.

A written list of current HSRs and DHSRs will be provided on WHS Noticeboards. Where HSRs and Deputy HSRs are elected, the relevant state safety regulator must be notified via:

- SafeWork NSW: <https://hsr.safework.nsw.gov.au/>
- Worksafe QLD: WHSnotification@oir.qld.gov.au

GVK Group will support the elected HSRs and DHSRs by:

- giving them time off at normal pay, and any necessary facilities and assistance, to enable them to fulfil their role,
- talking with them about health and safety issues,
- giving them access to all information regarding hazards and risks affecting the work group,
- allowing them to attend interviews about work health and safety, if the worker consents,
- allowing a person assisting the HSR to enter the workplace, if that assistance is necessary,
- permitting them to accompany an inspector on an inspection of areas where the workers they represent work,
- giving them five days training and a one-day annual refresher course, if requested.

6. Health and Safety Committee

A health and safety committee brings together workers and management to assist in the development and review of health and safety policies and procedures for the workplace.

GVK Group will establish a health and safety committee within two months after being requested to do so by five or more workers at the workplace, or by a health and safety representative for those workers.

Health and safety representatives may choose to be members of the health and safety committee. In total, at least half of the members of the committee must be workers who are not nominated by management.

The health and safety committee must meet at least once every three months and at any reasonable time at the request of at least half of the committee members.

Important details of a health and safety committee (e.g. its membership, functions and how it will operate) are to be outlined through a 'constitution'. The constitution is to be developed on the formation of the health and safety committee.

All health and safety committee meetings are to have an agreed agenda circulated ahead of the meeting and during the meeting, records are to be taken of key points of discussion, decisions, and action items. Meeting minutes are to be circulated soon after the meeting and are to be accessible to all workers.

7. Communication with staff

GVK Group will conduct monthly staff meetings. The meetings will be held at the premises of GVK Group and be chaired by the state manager. Meeting notes will be taken and circulated to all staff no more than 2 days after the meeting. Meeting notes will be retained.

Each team leader will hold individual meetings with workers in their team. Meeting notes will be retained. These meetings will be held monthly and are an opportunity for workers to discuss their workload, concerns, challenges and well-being. If a worker has concerns about their workload or other personal issues, they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of their supervisor immediately and not wait till the monthly individual meeting.

As part of the consultation process for WHS issues and review of policies and procedures, HSRs will be directly e-mailed to request a review of a document, provide feedback or make changes within the document. HSRs will be provided timely review of the documentation of at least 2 weeks. However, for more urgent consultation, this review period may be shorter at the discretion of the state manager or Director.

GVK Group has a monthly WHS newsletter that is circulated to all employees and on display on WHS noticeboards. Workers can contribute to the newsletter and it provides simple and practical information on health and safety in our workplace. Information on updated health and safety policies and procedures is also included.

8. Education and training

Employee information on the consultation and communication processes at GVK Group will occur as part of the induction process.

9. Review

This procedure remains in force until such time as it is withdrawn or amended by way of undertaking a review and an updated version is issued. As a guideline, this procedure will be reviewed by senior management every two years.

10. Breach

Employees are required to comply with this procedure as a condition of their employment. Any breach of this procedure may lead to disciplinary action. Employees wishing to discuss any aspect of this procedure should contact their manager.

11. Relevant Acts and Regulations

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW)

12. Relevant Documents

Code of Practice: Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination

Code of Practice: How to manage health and safety risks