

Psychosocial Risk Assessment - Change Principles: Consultation Paper - APRIL 2025

This assessment of psychosocial risk is based on the template available at Appendix C of the Work Health and Safety (Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work) Code of Practice 2024.

Context

The University is working to strengthen its long-term sustainability. The Renew ANU 2025 Change Principles: Consultation Paper (the Paper) outlines the strategic and operational challenges faced by ANU and the proposed responses which include design principles for the proposed University Operating Model. That document outlines the University's overall approach to University-wide improvements and sets the foundation for future discussions by providing an overarching view of the next phase of Renew ANU.

The following key activities identified through the Paper's discussion, form the basis of this risk assessment:

1. Pursue savings, including a reduction in non-staff costs. These savings support the long-term sustainability of the University.
2. Adopt principles which inform the development of change proposals. These change proposals will help achieve a new operating model which may include the removal of operational duplication, further supporting long-term sustainability.

| Risk statement | Hazard(s) | How frequently would employees be exposed to this hazard | How long would the exposure last? | How severe would an employee's exposure be | What other hazards may interact with this particular hazard? | How effective are current control measures? | Measures to enhance control effectiveness |
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| | | | | | | | See Work Health and Safety (Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work) Code of Practice 2024 |
| Pursuing changes to improve the operating model and reduce costs may expose an employee to psychological effects due to uncertainty about the future changes. | 1. Poor organisational change management. | 1. Likely to occur but variable based on the frequency and timing of organisational change proposals. | Varies with the duration and effectiveness of communication to staff and the future change proposal consultation. | Low to moderate level of exposure due to the quality and clarity of communication, consultation and planning. | The following hazards may have a direct interaction: - Job demands - Job insecurity - Lack of Role Clarity | Partially effective, with variations in likelihood and consequence. Current control measures include: - Commitment to consult with employees who are, or are likely to be, affected by a specific change, once a proposal is developed. - Provide clear, authoritative information about upcoming changes as soon as possible and keep employees up to date. - Ensure workers understand the changes and why they're happening. - Leaders to actively engage in providing regular updates in a timely manner as soon as updated information is available to be provided, focus on building trust in the workforce. Schedule regular team meetings or communication to provide reassurance and guide employees through the change, encouraging active input into change proposals. - Ensure changes are reasonable and fair (e.g. distribute work fairly). - Provide flexible work arrangements for work-life balance. - Be empathetic to any frustration and help with any challenges. - Encourage employees to engage with consultation and change management processes. - Promote access to employee assistance program services, financial support sessions. - Ensure EAP services are prominently advertised and coordinate special EAP sessions as required. | It is not reasonably practicable to effectively control this hazard solely based on elimination strategies. To improve control effectiveness further strategies need to be consider around substitution (role clarity, job control), engineering (job design) and administration (clarity of change proposals). Examples of a range of control measures include those set out below. Ensure a WHS risk assessment is completed for each change proposal (including risk assessment regarding impact on psychological health) and reviewed during implementation of change. 1. Planning: Where reasonably practicable provide an overview of likely timing of development and implementation of change proposals. Ensure lessons learnt from past and recent organisational changes result in improvements in change proposal development, consultation and implementation. Where reasonably practicable, schedule extended lead times for consultative periods to ensure employees have a realistic opportunity to review and comment on change proposals. Design organisational change to include additional principles of: seeking to minimise involuntary separations, plan or forecast voluntary separations; and wellbeing and cultural safety strategies. 2. Skill building and development opportunities: Provide opportunity for managers to upskill in the process of organisational change management. Increase employee skills and confidence for transferrable skills and career development. Access internal supports such as the ANU scholarship schemes (PSSS and PSDEF), training and development courses, LinkedIn learning, workplace skills building. Ensure resources are available to provide guidance on managing change. 3. Recognition and Rewards: During the period of transition create particular opportunities to acknowledge staff that may be doing additional work and supporting their team members through formal or informal methods. Consider financial recognition such as responsibility loading. 4. Work design: Modify work plans to allow for periods of change. Ensure employee duties, tasks, objectives and reporting is fair and reasonable. Ensure employees are engaged in developing new job roles and descriptors. Ensure employees are adequately resourced to complete existing and new jobs. |
| Developing change proposals based on the principles outlined in the consultation paper may expose an employee to a range of foreseeable psychosocial hazards related to organisational change. | 1. Job demands 2. Job insecurity | 1 & 2. Varies depending on the extent, frequency and timing of organisational change proposals. Likely to occur during change proposal consultation and during change proposal implementation. | 1 & 2. Ongoing pre and post consultation and change. | 1 & 2. Moderate level of exposure due to the potential uncertainty about organisational structure whilst proposed changes are identified and change proposals are developed. | The following hazard may have a direct interaction: - Poor organisational change management. | Partially effective if employees have limited information about how change proposals will affect them personally, creating a climate of uncertainty. Current control measures for job demands include: - Conduct regular meetings with staff to discuss tasks and provide the required information and support. - Plan non-urgent work for quieter periods. - Ensure sufficient breaks and recovery time between shifts, including the use of annual leave and wellbeing leave, workplace adjustments and/or facilitate access to EAP and other support services. - Find efficiencies (e.g. redesign processes to reduce double handling). - Provide quiet spaces for doing mentally demanding work. - Reduce the risk of mistakes (e.g. use IT systems to capture important information and generate reminders). - Train workers so they have the skills to do the job safely. | The hazards associated with job characteristics, design and management require a combination of control measures involving substitution, engineering, administration and personal protective equipment. Examples of control measures include the following. Job demands: 1. Prioritise tasks: Provide clear guidelines and empowerment for managers and employees on managing and monitoring workloads and expectations. Regularly review key deliverables to re-prioritise work, review tasks that can be discontinued or put on hold. 2. Set work goals: Improve role clarity through accurate position descriptions and FOCUS goals, break down work tasks, provide opportunities for focused work time to improve productivity. 3. Resource management: Delegate tasks effectively, fill job vacancies in a timely manner, enhance workforce planning and manage resources across a team to manage peak workloads, provide induction and a buddy support system for new staff, train workers for tasks and provide development opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. 4. Workload management tools: Consider improvements for systems that increase work efficiency capturing and monitoring workload level data. 5. Safety: Ensure work requiring personal protective equipment is appropriately assessed and employees resourced to work safely. |
| | | | | | | Current control measures for job insecurity include those controls centred on mitigating the hazard associated with poor organisational change management. Key controls include: - Promote, support and guide employees to available EAP programs. - Provide reporting mechanisms for employees to raise concerns or issues; - Measures to support voluntary reductions in staffing by way of the Voluntary Separation Scheme, helping minimise job insecurity. - Pursue non-labor costs savings to help minimise labor costs savings required. | Job insecurity: - Clarity and further information provided in further specific change proposals to be provided as soon as reasonably practicable. - Design further specific change proposals to minimise involuntary reduction in staff, where reasonably practicable. - Consult regularly with employees on change proposals and implementation. - Avoid precarious or uncertain work arrangements. - Review and adjust work agreements and entitlements to provide certainty. - Assign work fairly and provide reward/recognition for achievements |
| | 3. Harmful Behaviours (includes hazards such as bullying, harassment including sexual harassment) | 3. Possible exposure to all employees (including managers) during consultation and implementation stages of organisational change. | 3. Periodic or isolated during pre and post change, in some cases exposure may be insidious. | 3. Moderate to high level of exposure due to psychological effects such as stress, anxiety, or depression and physical effects involving poor health and/or self-harm. Poor organisational change management is a contributing factor to hazard realisation. | | Current control measures for harmful behaviours include: - Policy on employee code of conduct. - Procedure for preventing discrimination, harassment and bullying. - Enterprise Agreement clauses related to bullying and harassment, managing unsatisfactory performance and grievance resolution. - University management strategies involving training and awareness, reporting mechanisms and grievance management procedures. | Control measures must eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, the hazards associated with harmful behaviours and risk of psychological harm. Elimination will require a combination of isolation, substitution and administrative control measures focused on prevention and response. Control measures may be grouped under categories such as physical work environment and physical security. The following controls are examples for reference in assessing the risk associated with a change proposal. Physical work environment: - Communication: Regular clear communication on change proposals and expected behaviours. - Policy and procedures: Ensure policy and procedures are applied in a consistent and timely manner. - Training: Continue ensuring training is regularly delivered to employees and managers in how to recognise bullying, respond to this behaviour and report events/issues. - Review: Identify trends in reported behaviours and develop/implement further measures to control the hazard/risk. Physical security: - Alarm or reporting systems: Ensure employees are aware of how to report issues or events. Provide advice on maintaining physical safety. - Access control: Ensure employees have access to secure facilities as required. Continue to limit entry to secure areas to essential persons only. - Visibility: Continue to ensure after hours common or movement areas have adequate light. - Environment: Ensure public facing areas are assessed and structured to provide an appropriate level of security. |