Creating Good Work Through Effective Design

Dr Kirsten Way 1, Nita Maynard 2

1 Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, AUSTRALIA

1. Background

The Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022 (the Australian Strategy) includes an action area aimed at encouraging hazards to be eliminated or minimised by good design. Current Australian national guidance material covers some technical aspects of the physical and biomechanical design of work but does not address the design of work for psychological hazards and risks. There is a need for principles for good work and effective design processes based on empirical evidence for key physical, biomechanical, cognitive and psychosocial hazards and risks.

2. Purpose of the Project

In 2013 Safe Work Australia commenced work to support this outcome including developing draft national principles and guidance material. The ‘Good Work through Effective Design’ project is being led by Safe Work Australia members from Comcare and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) with support from other regulators, unions and industry representatives and experts in work design.

When approved the principles should assist:

- Those who have specific design duties under the Australian Work Health and Safety laws relating to the design of plant, substances and structures (including buildings in which people work) and,
- Persons who have responsibility for designing work processes and systems, etc. including ergonomists, hygienists, psychologists, officers, managers, human resources personnel, and information technology and systems engineers

Importantly these principles will be designed to encourage those with work design responsibilities to go beyond mere legislative compliance and to strive to create workplaces that are safe, healthy and contribute to organisational viability.

3. Workshop Outcomes

This workshop will provide an overview of this important national project and include a discussion of the evidence base for the draft principles of work design. Workshop participants will ‘test’ the good work design draft principles against scenarios including downsizing, introduction of new technology and work redesign to accommodate large numbers of workers with reduced capabilities. Workshop outcomes will also inform Australia’s consultation on the principles and the need for supporting resource material.

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