

Institute of Health and Wellbeing

PROJECT TITLE:	Impact of Workplace Health and Safety education on professional practice in Australia
PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:	Dr Stephen Weber
OTHER/STUDENT RESEARCHERS:	-

This project has ethics approval with ethics reference number 2023-163.

1. Introduction & Purpose of the Research

You have indicated that you are someone who is working in the Work Health and Safety (WHS) field in Australia, and has either 3 years (min.) work experience in a WHS role, or undertaken an Australian Tafe or Tertiary course (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Bachelor, or Masters) in WHS, and then continued to perform work in a WHS role. We would like to understand your experience and perceptions relating to your capability to perform WHS role and your perceptions regarding WHS education. As a professional in this field your knowledge and experience will aid in the understanding of the current design and content of WHS tertiary courses, whether there are significant gaps in their course content, whether their current design actually improves a person's ability to perform WHS roles and functions and do they align with current workplace needs and risks.

This document is called a Plain Language Information Statement (PLIS) and outlines the research project topic on the Impact of Workplace Health and Safety tertiary education on professional practice in Australia. The details and process outlined will aid you in deciding if you are interested in taking part in this study.

Please read this information carefully. If you do not understand any part of this document, a phone number is provided which can be contacted on queries about any part of this document that concerns you or you simply would like to know more about. Prior to commencing your participation, you will be asked to provide consent to be interviewed.

2. What does participation in this research involve?

Once you have decided to participate in this study, you can contact the Chief Investigator to have any of your queries addressed. You will be provided with a consent form to sign and return to the Chief investigator as confirmation that you have agreed to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, the interview will be undertaken by the Chief Investigator (Dr Stephen Weber) either face to face or via the video-communication platform Teams at a time that is mutually agreed on. It is anticipated that the interview might be between 30-45 minutes long. Prior to the interview you will be sent a short questionnaire to collect relevant demographic information.

Interviews will begin with open-ended questions, relating to your experience and education in WHS, your perception of your ability to perform WHS activities, what impact or influence you feel WHS education has or can contribute to your WHS practice, and what areas you feel were not impacted or improved by the education you undertook.

Some further questions might be asked related to your knowledge of WHS professional standards and the state of education or skill of WHS professionals in general, potential barriers you've encountered regarding attending WHS education etc. Further exploration may occur of your perceptions of skills of WHS professionals with various education levels and pathways and areas in which you perceive gaps or improvements. This will help us learn about the standard of WHS education and where areas for improvement may arise.

3. Do you have to take part in this research project?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part in this study and then decide to change your mind later, you are free to withdraw from the research at any stage.

4. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

While it cannot be guaranteed that you will receive any benefits from being a part of this research project, it is expected that as a participant, your involvement may result in you gaining a better understanding of the impact your education has provided to your capabilities to perform your role as a WHS professional.

5. What are the possible risks and disadvantages of taking part?

It is not anticipated that the interview process will pose significant risk to you as a participant. The only foreseeable risk of participating in this study is that there may be a cost to you in terms of your time. If at any point of the interview, you feel distressed or become upset as a result of your participation, you will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the research and to also withdraw any information that you have shared with the Chief Investigator. If you find that some of the research questions that we ask during the interview upsetting and you do not wish to answer, you are free to skip a question or to stop your participation. The Chief Investigator will also be able to arrange for support through services such as Lifeline 13 11 14 and Beyond Blue 1300 224 636.

6. What if I withdraw from this research project?

If you decide to withdraw from the research, please notify the Chief Investigator. There will be no disadvantage to you if you choose to withdraw from the research study. Any personal information already collected and published following deidentification as part of the research that is therefore anonymous and cannot be linked to you, will be retained for use in the research project to ensure that the findings of the project are sound.

7. Could this research project be stopped unexpectedly?

This research project may be stopped unexpectedly if the employment of the researcher changes or an unexpected ongoing illness of the Chief Investigator. It is not likely or expected that the research project will be stopped unexpectedly.

8. What happens when the research project ends?

It is anticipated that by late 2024 a summary of the results of this study will be available as a peer reviewed journal article(s). If you would like a copy of a brief report surrounding the outcomes of the study, it will be accessible by contacting Dr. Stephen Weber at Federation University directly on request. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your express permission.

9. What will happen to information about me?

By signing the consent form, you consent to the Chief Investigator collecting and using personal information about you as part of this research program. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you, or any specific organisation will remain confidential and will not appear on the transcript or text of the interview.

Once you have completed your participation in the interview, the audio recording will be transcribed into text and only the Chief Investigator will be able to use the data for analysis. It will not be possible to identify you from the data that is entered and as such all information about you will remain confidential. Your deidentified information may be used for the purpose of other research projects that the Chief Investigator conducts in the future in addition to this project if the Human Research Ethics Committee approves a proposal to use the deidentified information.

Please note that only your interviewer will know who said what in any written report of the findings. Information you have provided will be disclosed to others only with your permission obtained by the interviewer, except as required by law. In accordance with relevant Australian and/or Victorian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to request access to the information about your participation that is collected and stored by the research team. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please inform the Chief Investigator named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

The data collected in this study will be retained as hard copies (paper-based) stored at Federation University in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office, as well as via cloud-based share points such as Figshare in which only the Chief Investigator has access to. It will be kept for a minimum of five years and will be destroyed by shredding the hard copy file and deleting the electronic file.

Given the scope of the qualitative research being proposed it is anticipated there will be a number of peripheral themes and findings identified not directly related to the primary topic of research. As such additional use of the data relating to this proposed body of work is potentially to be used, by the internal Chief Investigator only, for adjunct research topics or publications.

10. Complaints and compensation

Any complaints received from participants, or their families will be directed to and handled by the Secretary of the Federation University Human Research Ethics Committee.

The participant will not benefit financially from their involvement in this research study. In addition, if knowledge acquired through this research leads to discoveries that are of commercial value to the researchers or their institutions, there will be no financial benefit to you from these discoveries. No member of the research team will receive a personal financial benefit from your involvement in this research project (other than their ordinary wages).

11. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is being conducted by Dr. Stephen Weber, Course Coordinator and Senior Lecturer at Federation University, Institute of Health and Wellbeing. There is no external funding or funding agency supporting the research. If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled *Impact of Workplace Health and Safety tertiary education on professional practice in Australia* please contact the Chief Investigator, **Dr Stephen Weber** of the School of **Institute of Health and Wellbeing**

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Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Coordinator - Research Ethics, Research Services, Federation University Australia,

P O Box 663 Mt Helen Vic 3353

Telephone: (03) 5327 9765

Email: research.ethics@federation.edu.au

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