

11 September 2025

Redundancy minefield – psychosocial hazards

On 2 September, SafeWork NSW, the NSW work health and safety regulator, issued a prohibition notice preventing the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) from proceeding with a scheduled meeting with its staff to discuss potential redundancies. The prohibition notice was issued because SafeWork NSW believed that the way UTS was handling the redundancy process risked staff members' mental health. This situation highlights once again the complex challenges employers face in managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

UTS scheduled a meeting to discuss the potential redundancy of approximately 150 academic positions. The meeting notice was distributed the day before the meeting was scheduled to be held. SafeWork NSW's prohibition notice referred to the "serious and imminent risk of psychological harm" to staff if the meeting proceeded as scheduled.

The prohibition notice required UTS to delay the proposed meeting, delay releasing its proposed redundancy plan, explain to staff the reasons for the redundancies, and consult with staff in accordance with various legislative requirements.

UTS cancelled the scheduled meeting in compliance with the prohibition notice and is reportedly developing a new timetable and process for the proposed redundancies.

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace present many challenges for employers. In 2022, SafeWork Australia published a model code of practice on [Managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace](#). Codes of practice have also been issued in various States and Territories, including SafeWork NSW's [Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#).

Employers must eliminate or minimise psychosocial risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

A psychosocial hazard is anything at work that could cause psychological harm, although such hazards can also cause physical harm. Psychosocial hazards can be created by:

- the design or management of work,
- the working environment,
- plant at the workplace, or
- workplace interactions or behaviours.

SafeWork NSW's Code of Practice identifies the following common psychosocial hazards:

- Role overload (i.e. high workloads or job demands),
- Role underload,
- Exposure to traumatic events,
- Role conflict or lack of role clarity,
- Low job control,
- Conflict or poor work relationships between workers and their supervisors, managers and co-workers,
- Poor support from supervisors and managers,

- Poor co-worker support,
- Workplace violence,
- Bullying,
- Harassment, including sexual harassment,
- Inadequate reward and recognition,
- Hazardous physical working environments,
- Remote or isolated work,
- Poor procedural justice (i.e. processes for making decisions), and
- Poor organisational change consultation.

For further advice or assistance regarding redundancy, mental health, WHS, or workers' compensation matters, please contact Stephen Smith, Principal of Actus Workplace Lawyers, on 0418 461 183 or via email at stephen.smith@actuslawyers.com.au.