



# Good Practice in Socially Responsible Restructuring

This Good Practice guide stems from a report that was provided by the independent National Automotive Facilitator to the National Governance Committee, the governance body overseeing the transition assistance for retrenched automotive manufacturing workers in Australia. This advice reflects on the approaches taken by stakeholders and provides what may be considered a blueprint for good practice in socially responsible restructuring.

## How to be socially responsible when restructuring?

Socially responsible restructuring can transform a stressful experience into a positive career transition for workers.

This Good Practice guide highlights four broad themes employers can draw upon to guide them and their workers through the transition process in a socially responsible manner. The themes underpinning good practice in socially responsible restructuring are:

- regular information and ongoing support
- career and training options advice for workers
- skills recognition, support for training for workers
- support to find a new job.

Employers who engaged in socially responsible restructuring reported increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, higher worker morale and brand loyalty.

It is not expected that employers do this alone. Your response can be tailored to your circumstances depending on the size of the business, resources available and number of retrenched workers. There is help available through government and other service providers. Details of who to contact are provided in this document and employers are encouraged to seek advice and support.

## Information and ongoing support

It is important that retrenched workers are provided with timely and accurate information about the retrenchment process. Accurate, regular and up to date information removes some of the uncertainty experienced by workers facing retrenchment and enables them to begin planning their transition. Regular communication is key to ensuring retrenched workers remain engaged with available support services and improves their future employment prospects.

## What information should I provide to retrenched workers?

Employers may not have all the necessary information to begin with. However, it is important employers share relevant information with workers as it filters through so that workers feel informed about the process.

Whole of workforce information sessions during and outside work hours are a useful way to share information and allow workers to ask questions or raise concerns they may have. Information sessions could cover:

- support available and how to access it
- information about the jobs available in the local area or where to look for local opportunities
- information about support to reskill and/or upskill for new employment opportunities
- information about financial support including redundancy payouts, Centrelink income support, superannuation advice
- where to get information on other assistance available through Government and local community services
- a consistent point of contact within the workplace for workers to engage with for guidance.

## How can I share information with workers?

Often information sessions contain large volumes of information and can be overwhelming. Employers could also make this information available elsewhere, including:

- internal communication sources such as lunch room bulletin boards and internal websites; newsletters and text messages
- a telephone hotline staffed by people with knowledge of the support available to workers
- a roaming transition team that visits team meetings to promote engagement with the services to support transition
- larger businesses could consider establishing an on-site Transition Centre to give workers and their partners/families a place to seek further information and guidance.

## What government services might be available?

Support services are available at all levels of government. Factsheets for each state can be found at:

[www.whatsnext.dewr.gov.au/where-do-i-stand/help-your-area](http://www.whatsnext.dewr.gov.au/where-do-i-stand/help-your-area).

These will provide details of who you can contact to help you support your workers.

## Career and Training assistance

Some workers may have been in their current job for many years and may not be aware of the employment and training opportunities that exist. To help workers kickstart their transition process, employers could engage qualified career counsellors to provide retrenched workers with individualised career advice focused on reviewing strengths, skills and experience. Early engagement with career and training discussions can increase worker productivity and engagement, as workers will feel supported through the transition process.

### How can I encourage workers to use the transition assistance?

Some workers may require additional support to access the assistance available. Employers can encourage workers to engage with transition assistance in a number of ways, including:

- promoting to workers the value of coming early to careers and transition support to find out where the jobs are and what employers are looking for
- using trusted people from the organisation such as supervisors, colleagues or union shop stewards to promote available support
- holding information sessions in a child friendly location or hours so workers with children are able to attend
- helping workers to improve their computer or IT skills to prepare them for online job search
- contacting your local community organisations or adult learning centre to assist workers who may need additional language, literacy or numeracy support
- promoting case studies of co-workers and past employees who have successfully transitioned to new jobs or careers or are on the way to transitioning.

## Skills recognition and training

Workers are often unaware of their transferable skills. Transferable skills are the skills and behaviours, which can be applied to a wide range of different jobs and industries. Employers can help workers identify their transferable skills in a number of ways such as:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) via Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), TAFE
- using career advisors to advise on how to tailor resumes and job applications
- reviewing job vacancies and needs of other employers.

### How can I facilitate skills recognition and training?

There are a number of ways employers can support workers with skills recognition and training:

- offer workers a skills check/audit as part of their support to up-skill or re-skill
- provide advice on study options at Registered Training Organisations or community adult learning facilities
- promote the use of entry level courses to build up to higher level certificate courses and strengthen existing skills.

## Support to find a new job

Finding a new job can be difficult and can take some time to be successful. Some workers have not applied for a job for many years. Therefore, it is important workers feel supported in their search for a new job to avoid them becoming long term unemployed. Employers can support workers in the search for new jobs by reaching out to their consumer and supplier networks to promote job vacancies to their workers and the skills of their workers to potential new employers.

### How can I help employees find a new job?

Employers could support workers in their job search in the following ways:

- host a jobs information session on site or at a local community facility in partnership with local employers and RTOs
- promote local employment opportunities through a central location such as a purpose built website, closed Facebook page or jobs board or links to existing job sites
- invite local businesses who are recruiting to present to your workers about the jobs available and how to apply
- connect with industry peak bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce to identify employers and sectors that are recruiting and interested in the skills sets of your employees
- promote local employers who may be willing to provide work experience opportunities to try out new careers
- promote/provide advice on recruitment agencies/jobactive providers that specialise in placements to industries the employees are interested in.

## Tips for disengaged workers

Retrenchment is a difficult time and some workers may find it more difficult than their colleagues. Employers may want to ensure those workers who appear disengaged or stressed are receiving the support they need.

Employers could try to connect with disengaged workers in a number of ways:

- have a confidential discussion about their next steps after retrenchment
- consider locations for support that are not related to the workplace such as community support agencies
- encourage attendance of partners or family members at information sessions
- offer referral to work sponsored counselling such as Employee Assistance Programs to ensure workers are well supported; including their health and wellbeing
- use local culturally relevant community support groups, interpreters etc. for workers with English as a second language.

## Where can I get more information?

For more information please visit - <https://whatsnext.dewr.gov.au/> or contact the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations at [industryadjustment@dewr.gov.au](mailto:industryadjustment@dewr.gov.au).