# Enabler: Harnessing workforce commitment

*Ambulance Victoria’s workforce is deeply committed to its work of service to the community. Utilising this commitment through enhanced participation in workplace reforms will better enable Ambulance Victoria to deliver changes that are fit for purpose.*

## Why is this an enabler for reform?

Better utilisation of high workforce commitment through improved participation is likely to have flow-on benefits for the reforms through increasing the trust and confidence of the workforce that the intent of the reforms will be fully realised and have tangible impacts on people’s day-to-day work.

Throughout Progress Evaluation Audit data collection, the Commission heard that Ambulance Victoria’s operational and non-operational workforce has deep commitment to, and derives great personal reward from, performing their roles and being of service to the community.

As a non-operational staff member, I can say I'm honoured/proud to be part of Ambulance Victoria. Every time I see an ambulance in traffic, I proudly say "there goes my people”.

Participant

Not all organisations have the benefit of a workforce that is so heavily invested in what they do and this can bring unintended consequences. The Commission heard that this commitment appears to be taken for granted or used as a reason not to change ways of working.

I had a [senior leader] say to me if the blue shirts don't like it, they know where the door is. There are a line of people waiting to take their job.

Participant

## What are the impacts of this reform enabler for implementing the Review recommendations?

Harnessing this workforce commitment through enhanced opportunities for the workforce to contribute to shaping reforms would better enable Ambulance Victoria to implement the following recommendations:

* Recommendation 1: Learning through reflective practice and 41: Board learning through reflective practice: Implementing reflective practice across the organisation could be better enabled through participatory approaches that acknowledge and positively utilise the workforce’s commitment.
* Recommendation 42: Organisational healing and cultural change through reflective practice: Delivering cultural change and healing could be better enabled through encouraging shared responsibility for reforms so they become everyone’s responsibility.
* Recommendation 20: Understanding how the report and complaint system is working: Engaging staff and sharing responsibility to track progress could positively influence reform in areas such as complaint benchmark development.
* Recommendation 9: Contact officers and local champions network: Contact officers and local champions networks enhance and model workforce commitment, and could help to ensure that Ambulance Victoria’s high workforce commitment is harnessed through improved participation. Leveraging the trust and influence of contact officers and local champions could help bridge the gap between leadership and the workforce.

Select the links above for further information on how this barrier is impacting recommendation implementation.

## What are the impacts of harnessing this reform enabler for the Ambulance Victoria workforce?

### Meaningful engagement with Ambulance Victoria’s highly committed workforce can improve trust and confidence

During the Progress Evaluation Audit, the Commission heard that Ambulance Victoria’s workforce feels unheard and that there is a disconnect between senior leaders and the rest of the workforce. This, along with a lack of trust that the reforms will be implemented, is contributing to a sense of workforce change fatigue and disengagement. Lack of employee involvement and participation in change is a known barrier to successful organisational change.[[1]](#footnote-1) Progress Evaluation Audit workforce results showed the same pattern, with only 14% of respondents reporting that they agreed that Ambulance Victoria listens to the views of employees and first responders about ideas for changes to the workplace to reduce and prevent unlawful and harmful conduct; 65% disagreed with this statement. This point in Ambulance Victoria’s reform journey presents an opportunity for the organisation to reconsider how it can meaningfully improve the way it engages its workforce in implementation.

I think it's kind of interesting to me that the workforce, when I sit down and talk to them, they don't see the Staff Reference Group at all. They don't see any sort of action by the workplace. They don't see the Executive doing anything positive in this space. And yet there is still an underlying feeling from within the workforce that there is something positive to be had as a result of the VEOHRC report.

Participant

### Participatory approaches will enhance workforce input into organisational decision-making and deliver better reform outcomes

Through existing governance mechanisms (including the Staff Reference Group) or new participatory approaches, Ambulance Victoria could improve collaboration with the main beneficiaries of implementation activities – the workforce.

The Victorian Public Sector Commission Innovation Network defines participatory approaches as ‘planning, designing, implementing and evaluating with people who are affected by the products, policies, services and systems we are designing. Using participatory approaches means progressing beyond traditional stakeholder engagement activities such as informing or consulting – moving from “doing to” and “doing for” into the “doing with” space’.[[2]](#footnote-2) There is an opportunity for Ambulance Victoria’s workforce to be more influential in decisions that affect their workplace, so that their input can help to shape better reform outcomes.

We’re an incredible workforce of problem-solvers, like, we’re designed to go into an unknown situation with very little information and provide them the best care that they need and deserve.

Participant

Given Ambulance Victoria’s highly operational nature and the fact that the workforce is dispersed across the state, participatory approaches can be challenging to implement but should be prioritised. Participatory approaches could include:

* embracing a range of perspectives, deferring judgement and deepening understanding
* elevating the voices of lived experience and engaging directly with people rather than making assumptions
* creating a welcoming environment where people feel comfortable and valued
* avoiding rushing to conclusions, instead spending time exploring questions and insights with others
* learning through doing, including by testing assumptions early and often through prototyping to learn what works[[3]](#footnote-3)
* valuing diverse perspectives to understand different views and find common ground, to facilitate spaces for honest, inclusive conversations that respect all perspectives.[[4]](#footnote-4)
1. Ali Mohammad Mosadeghrad and Maryam Ansarian, ‘Why do organisational change programmes fail?’ (2014) *International Journal of Strategic Change Management* 5(3) 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Understanding participatory approaches | Innovation Network’ <https://innovationnetwork.vic.gov.au/toolkits/understanding-participatory-approaches#What>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ambulance Victoria’s work on reflective practice is aligned with this mindset and could be mutually reinforcing. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ‘Principles and mindsets for participatory approaches | Innovation Network’ <https://innovationnetwork.vic.gov.au/toolkits/principles-and-mindsets-participatory-approaches>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)