

App-based food delivery platforms in the Australian gig economy

Food delivery platforms are crucial stakeholders within the gig economy's work health and safety landscape.

Our research explored their knowledge, behaviours, and concerns in relation to the work health and safety of the food delivery workers they engage.

What we did

- Review of academic literature, policy documents, and position papers
- Interviews with large, global platforms; small, local platforms; and an e-bike hire company
- Service safari, in which researchers signed up, went through onboarding, and worked a shift for a platform



Key platform characteristics

- Contractor-based business model
- Use automated systems and algorithmic management to coordinate the activities of workers, restaurants, and consumers
- Currently operating* platforms include Deliveroo, DoorDash, Easi, Hungry Panda, Menulog, and Uber Eats
- Represent 5.6% of restaurant trade*



What do they know about WHS?

- Have dedicated WHS teams, which aim to retain and satisfy their fleet of workers
- Believe that workers have primary responsibility for their own WHS



What do stakeholders do about WHS?

- WHS training during onboarding
- In-app safety features
- Some safety equipment
- Mechanisms for reporting WHS incidents
- Vehicle hire companies include safety equipment and regular maintenance in their standard rental pricing



What challenges do they face in improving worker WHS?

- International platforms can rapidly scale up global initiatives, but centralised control of product development makes tailoring local initiatives a challenge
- Distance is an obstacle for smaller, local platforms to providing hands-on training
- Belief among many platforms that mandating WHS training and providing safety equipment could risk the reclassification of workers to employees
- Low worker engagement with voluntary WHS initiatives



What can be done?

- Improve safety training
- Alter the order acceptance process
- Alter how delivery times are communicated
- Humanise food delivery workers to potential abusers
- Enable workers to rate the pick-up experience at restaurants
- Facilitate peer mentoring schemes
- Send safety prompts and reminders at critical moments
- Prompt food delivery workers to report unsafe hotspots



What are their top WHS concerns?

- Traffic accidents
- COVID-19
- Theft, particularly when the delivery contains alcohol
- Verbal abuse



Source
Convery, E., Howard, E., Powell, Z., Wodak, S., Fung, B., Quinn, V., Taylor, M., Searle, B., & Vårhammar, A. (2020). *Work health and safety perceptions of food delivery platforms in the gig economy*. Report prepared for the Centre for Work Health and Safety (NSW).

* At the time the research was conducted

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