



For Agribusiness Leaders

Shared PCBU Responsibilities

How exposed are you?



Who this is for

Operations, Safety, and Risk leaders in agribusinesses where multiple businesses work together - farmers, contractors, transporters, processors, service providers.

Why this matters

In agriculture, more than one business often controls the same risks - for example, a farm, a contractor operating machinery, and a transporter at the loading bay.

Under Australian and New Zealand law, each business is a PCBU and must manage risk so far as is reasonably practicable. When duties overlap, PCBUs must consult, cooperate, and coordinate (the 3Cs). You cannot contract away your duties - each PCBU remains responsible to the extent it has influence and control.

Poor coordination creates gaps. The recent high-profile case at Ports of Auckland showed how failures in leadership, governance and due diligence can result in officer-level liability. Shared work requires shared responsibility - and clear, consistent ways to demonstrate it at scale.

Definitions:

- **PCBU:** a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (e.g., farm, contractor, processor, transporter).
- **Overlapping duties:** when two or more PCBUs influence the same hazards & risks (same place, task, plant, or people).
- **3Cs:** the duty to Consult, Cooperate, and Coordinate with other PCBUs where duties overlap.

How to use this scorecard

- 1 Read each statement and select **Yes / Partly / No-Unsure**.
 - 2 Score **Yes = 2 | Partly = 1 | No/Unsure = 0**.
 - 3 Total your points (max **30**).
 - 4 Compare to the **Exposure Bands** below.
 - 5 Use the **Action Hints** to plan next steps.
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Scorecard - Overlapping Duties in practice (15 items, max 30 points)

A. Pre-work planning & risk identification

- 1 Before work starts, joint areas of responsibility are mapped (boundaries, access points, traffic routes and workplace) and visible to all PCBU's
☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
- 2 For each shared zone, hazards and controls are kept in a shared register and agreed before day one.
☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
- 3 **Dynamic risk:** When things change (weather, timings, equipment), a broadcast update goes to affected PCBU's and a re-plan is recorded.
☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

B. Induction, access & information sharing

- 4 All external workers (contractors, drivers, technicians, tradesmen) complete a site-specific induction for the joint area (site hazards, rules, emergency plan).

☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

- 5 Inductions are documented and verified for individuals actually on site (not just the contract holder).

☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

- 6 There's a single source of truth for updates (hazard register changes, restricted areas, biosecurity notices) that all PCBU(s) can see.

☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

C. Hazard ownership & role clarity

- 7 For each shared hazard, the lead PCBU and supporting PCBU(s) are named and visible in the shared plan/map.

☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

- 8 Stop-work authority is named for shared areas (who can pause work, direct traffic, enforce exclusion).

☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

- 9 Controls are coherent: no conflicting controls; layered controls are intentional and ownership is clear, including who verifies.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

D. Joint incident & emergency response

- 10 A coordinated emergency plan is stored for the joint area (who leads, who calls emergency services, assembly points, first aid) and is briefed to all parties.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

- 11 Regulator notification owner is named (jurisdiction-specific), with a shared contact tree and how others are told agreed.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

- 12 Post-incident is joint and recorded: PCBU's investigate together, share findings, and update shared controls/inductions with actions tracked to close-out.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

E. Monitoring, assurance & contractor management

- 13 Joint checks (site walks/toolbox talks) create a time-stamped trail; any worker - including contractors - can raise issues, anonymously if needed.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

- 14 Contractor selection includes safety pre-qualification evidence (systems, competence, certifications) kept with the contract record.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

- 15 We run periodic reviews together (seasonal/contract close-out) using trend data from reported risks/incidents to agree improvements.

☐ 2

☐ 1

☐ 0

Your exposure band (total out of 30)

24–30 = Low exposure: You have strong overlapping-duty practices and regulator-ready evidence. Keep them current: refresh inductions, re-test emergency roles, and pressure-test new joint areas.

15–23 = Moderate exposure: Solid intent, patchy execution. Prioritise the lowest-scoring category (often role clarity, notification, or information flow). Formalise what's verbal and schedule joint checks.

0–14 = High exposure: Multiple interface gaps - high risk of incident and enforcement. Start with a joint responsibilities map for your top two joint areas (who owns what, when, and how it's verified). Set a 30-day improvement plan.

What 'good' looks like (3 quick scenarios)

We run periodic reviews together (seasonal/contract close-out) using trend data from reported risks/incidents to agree improvements.

- Livestock loading bay (processor + transporter + farmer) Good: Traffic plan on the joint area map, exclusion zones marked, yard supervisor named, driver induction verified, emergency steps posted, single stop-work authority known to all.

Risk signal: Drivers arrive un-briefed; farmer expects transporters to manage pedestrians; no safe channel to report near-misses; no one knows who calls the regulator after a crush injury.

- Contractor spraying on farm (farmer + contractor) Good: Shared weather/chemical limits agreed, field boundaries & no-go zones mapped, PPE & decanting controls owned by contractor, ground conditions by host, scheduled radio check-ins.

Risk signal: "Experienced operator - they'll sort it"; no site map; timings change without notice; no shared update so people work in spray drift.

- Field service in workshop (farmer + electrical contractor) Good: Permit-to-work, isolation verified, responsible supervisor named, hot-work controls agreed; both parties complete a final check before restart.

Risk signal: Each assumes the other locked out the circuit; "just a quick job" with no induction; no record of who verified isolation.

What to do next

- Pick one joint responsibility area. In 30 minutes, digitally map the area and build a joint responsibility table (hazards, owner, control, verification, stop-work).
- Run a 10-minute pre-start with the other PCBU tomorrow: confirm roles, exclusion zones, notification owner, and how updates will be shared.
- Enable a safe reporting channel for everyone on site (including contractors) and ensure actions are assigned and closed out.
- Agree how you'll investigate together and how findings will update shared controls/inductions.

Note: This guide is general information, not legal advice. Always check local WHS/HSWA requirements.