

POLICY REGISTER

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Issue	Prepared/Revised By and Date	Action/Amendment Description	Approved By and Date
1.0	General Manager	First Edition	Council Minute No. 8.1.18 (25th January 2018)
1.1	General Manager	Amended	Council Minute No. 214.9.18 (27th September 2018)
1.2	General Manager	Amended	Council Minute No. 212.8.24 (22nd August 2024)
1.3	General Manager April 2025	Reviewed	Council Minute No. 92.4.25 (24th April 2025)

I INTRODUCTION

Warren Shire Council (Council) recognises that an employee's work performance can be affected by many business related and personal issues and has responsibilities under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. This Policy offers support in overcoming the above issues before impeding work performance.

II OBJECTIVE

The essential objective of the program is to provide access to professionally qualified and experienced psychologists in a highly confidential setting with a view to:

- decrease accidents, long-term disability costs, lost time injuries, reduce compensation claims
- increase employee attendance and productivity
- improve staff relations, motivation and morale
- minimise unplanned overtime due to absenteeism, sickness and turnover

This support takes the form of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which is a confidential service to all employees of Council who have been employed in excess of three (3) months. This support is also extended to temporary/contract staff but excludes agency workers.

III POLICY

The EAP is available to the following employees who might require assistance in resolving work and/or personal issues:

- Casual employees
- permanent employees (part-time or full-time)
- temporary employees (part-time or full-time) where the current contract of employment exceeds three (3) months
- Councillors

The EAP can provide help through face to face or telephone counselling on a range of issues including the following:

Personal/Family Issues –

- work/life balance
- concerns about children
- relationship issues
- financial or legal problems
- stress management
- substance abuse (including tobacco)
- grief or loss
- midlife issues
- marriage guidance
- domestic violence
- emotional or physical abuse
- low self-esteem
- gambling addiction

Clinical Issues –

- anxiety
- depression
- alcohol, drugs or other dependencies

Work Issues –

- problems with work performance
- relationships between co-workers
- managing conflict
- manager coaching
- adjusting to change
- handling work stress
- making career choices
- dealing with traumatic events (see ‘Council Directed Counselling’)

EAP counselling services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service operates in complete confidence between the provider and employee. The location of face to face counselling can be arranged directly between the provider and employee.

Employees may voluntarily and confidentially seek assistance by contacting the provider direct. Employees are to attend in their own time regarding the above program. The employee may utilise accrued flexi time or annual leave to access this program.

In each case, the employee’s immediate supervisor is to:

- respect the confidential nature of the issue (without having the need to know the detail of the issue)
- facilitate the employee’s access to the employee assistance provider as quickly as possible
- provide support to the employee throughout the employee assistance process.

Where the wellbeing of an employee from a work health and safety perspective is a matter of concern, the employee may be encouraged to attend by a colleague, supervisor or any manager.

Council Directed Counselling/Debriefing will be strongly encouraged with relevant employees in the following circumstances (NB the 3 month qualifying period does not apply):

- death of an employee of Council
- severe workplace accident causing injury or threat of death to an employee of Council
- death of a member of the public where a situation involves a Council employee, either through witnessing or actual involvement in the event
- severe personality conflict in the workplace
- armed hold up (perceived or actual) at the workplace
- a violent assault within or near the workplace and
- a natural or man-made disaster.

In the above circumstances, management will make arrangements for attendance during work hours without the need for the employee to access leave provisions.

Employees may access the EAP for up to four visits relating to any one issue per calendar year. However, an employee or the provider may seek approval to increase the number of visits through their Direct Manager on a strictly confidential basis.

The employee must provide proof of employment to the provider (e.g. a current payslip).

The content/subject matter of the counselling sessions will be a matter of confidence between the employee and counsellor. No information can be released by the counsellor to any other party unless the employee has given express permission for the release of the information in question.

This program is offered on the basis that Council will meet the cost of counselling up to the maximum limits outlined above. For non-Council Directed/Debriefing travel is at the employee's own expense. If an employee seeks further counselling or is referred to another organisation for additional assistance, the costs of these additional services must be borne by the employee.

Any employee experiencing difficulties in accessing the EAP should contact their Direct Manager immediately.

Contact details or further information on Councils EAP Provider will be promoted throughout Council Workplaces and can also be obtained from members of management or the WHS/Risk Officer.

IV *RELATED DOCUMENTS*

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

V *REVIEW*

This Policy should be reviewed every 4 years or within 12 months of a Council election. The Policy may be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative changes occur).