

Violence and Abuse Prevention

Overview

This policy explains how we will protect our workers and other people in the workplace and meet our legal duties.

Scope

This policy applies to St George Community Housing and its subsidiaries (**we, our and us**). Our workers and officers must comply with this policy.

Guiding principles

We will:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of people in the workplace by removing or reducing risks.
- Meet the requirements of the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(NSW\)](#), [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 \(NSW\)](#), Codes of Practice and other relevant legislation.
- Look for ways to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace.

Our duties

We have a legal duty to do as much as we reasonably can to protect the health and safety of workers while they are at work.

We do not allow abuse, violence, harassment, physical intimidation or aggressive behaviour in the workplace.

We will do as much as we can to:

- Provide a safe working environment for our workers
- Develop safe systems for work
- Give our workers information, training and instruction to help them protect themselves from abuse and violence in the workplace
- Monitor the health and safety of our workers
- Support any worker who feels threatened in the workplace.
- Help and support any worker who has experienced violence or aggressive behaviour from our customers.

Management responsibilities

Our officers have a responsibility to prevent or reduce the risk of violence. Our CEO will support management to take all practical steps to make sure that the workplace under their control is as safe as possible from the risk of violence.

The actions we will take to protect workers and other persons from the risk of violence include:

- Identifying, assessing and controlling risks of violence in the workplace.
- Training employees to respond to critical incidents, violence and aggressive behaviour.
- Supporting people after an incident.
- Regularly reviewing and updating procedures where necessary.
- Discussing safety and safe work methods with employees.
- Making sure that we have enough resources to develop systems to prevent and control violence and aggressive behaviour.
- Giving management the authority to respond quickly to violent and aggressive behaviour.
- Supporting all workers to meet their responsibilities as explained below.
- Monitoring the safety of our workers.

Worker responsibilities

Workers must:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- make sure their actions don't put the health and safety of other people at risk
- follow reasonable instructions that we give about work health and safety (WHS)
- follow any reasonable policy or procedure about WHS
- be polite and respectful to customers regardless of their background and personal situation.
- report aggressive, threatening or violent incidents by 10am the next business day.
- attend training as agreed by management to develop skills in working with aggressive behaviour.
- talk to their manager or our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider about any issues/feelings you have if you experience any violent or aggressive behaviour.

Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is any behaviour that creates a stressful, intimidating, frightening or offensive situation. This could include a wide range of unacceptable behaviours directed

toward workers or other persons. This behaviour could happen anywhere. It could be face to face, over the phone or in writing.

Aggressive behaviour can include:

- Rude noises, expressions or gestures.
- Threatening or offensive behaviour.
- Verbal abuse, raised voice or swearing, including racist and sexist comments.
- Threatening self-harm or harm to others.
- Physical violence towards a person or an object such as hitting, grabbing, punching, kicking, defacing or use of weapons.
- Unwelcome actions, including showing someone offensive material.
- Blocking exits or holding someone without their permission.
- Stalking including all forms of stalking e.g. physical stalking or stalking using phone, text or online platforms such as social media.

Aggressive behaviour can range from a raised voice and general verbal abuse through to actual physical violence. Angry behaviour is focused on an issue, while aggressive behaviour is directed away from the issues, either towards others, the environment (throwing objects) or towards the person themselves (self-harm).

High risk behaviour

A high risk customer is someone who has a history of high risk behaviour. This could include:

- violence and/or aggressive behaviour
- alcohol or drug abuse
- making threats to our workers or other people
- making unsupported and false claims
- behaviour that is disorderly or hard to manage
- making unreasonable complaints
- making sexual signs or comments
- making discriminatory, rude or offensive comments or actions
- Threats of suicide or self-harm

Identifying, investigating and dealing with high risk behaviour

If we think that a customer is high risk based on reports we receive, we will investigate the report within 7 days of receiving the information.

While we are investigating a report or a customer is identified as high risk, we will meet the legal requirements of the [WHS Act](#) and the [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#).

We will also tell our workers and other persons (including contractors) to take special safeguards when dealing with the person. The safeguards will depend on the type of risk but could include:

- Only visiting or meeting with the person when a second person (worker, contractor or service provider) is present.
- Making appointments in our offices when other workers are there.

We will notify other people (such as contractors) of possible risks if it could impact their health and safety at work.

We will continue to treat people fairly and apply our policies and procedures.

We will review risks regularly through our dealings with the person and their support providers (if applicable). If we think that the person isn't a risk anymore, we will remove this status from that person's records.

Supporting our workers

When our workers have ended contact with a person because of aggressive or high risk behaviour, the worker should tell their manager as soon as possible. Workers need to report violent or aggressive incidents using our Work Health and Safety and/or Critical Incidents policies and procedures. We will offer internal support and encourage workers to contact our Employee Assistance Program or another professional body (if appropriate). All incidents must be appropriately reported and recorded by 10am the next business day following the incident.

Contractors visiting our properties must report any incidents of aggression or high risk behaviour to us by the end of the next business day following an incident.

If any of our workers are assaulted or harassed by a customer during or outside work hours, we will offer them assistance including counselling, debriefing, and/or legal assistance and reimbursement for related costs.

After an incident

Any persons who saw or heard any part of the incident should be asked to provide a witness statement. Workers will not be treated any differently for reporting an incident.

Workers who experience aggression or violent behaviour from our customers might find the experience to be upsetting or stressful. Any worker who finds it difficult to cope with aggressive behaviour should talk to their manager or a member of the People, Capability and Performance team so that we can arrange training and/or support. Workers can also contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) directly.

After an incident, managers should offer support to all workers involved.

Relevant legislation, regulation and standards

- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)

Policy information

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