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## Violence and Abuse Prevention

### Overview

This Policy explains how we will protect our workers, contractors, directors, volunteers, and other people in the workplace and meet our legal duties with respect to violence and abuse in the workplace because of customer interaction.

### Scope

This policy applies to St George Community Housing and its subsidiaries (we, our and us), our workers, contractors, directors and volunteers.

This policy applies to all work (tasks, jobs, and projects) undertaken as part of an overall company activity.

A workplace is a place where work is carried out for us and includes any place where a worker, contractor, director, or volunteer goes, or is likely to be, while at work and may include:

- Our offices or buildings
- Home office
- A vehicle (our approved fleet, commercial vehicle, and private vehicle)
- Outdoor / offsite location including tenant properties and common areas.

### Purpose

The health, safety and wellbeing of our workers, contractors, directors, volunteers, and other people is our priority.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all workers, contractors, directors, volunteers, and other people are aware of and follow our guiding principles and objectives to ensure violence and abuse at work is prevented or managed and that we all go Home Safe every day.

### Objectives

We will:

- Apply this policy as a component of our overall Safety Management Framework
- Empower our people to lead by example in health, safety and wellbeing.
- Identify and control physical and psychosocial risks to create a safer workplace.
- Monitor and review controls in place as part of ongoing continuous improvement to continually improve worker safety, engagement, and well-being..
- Protect the health, safety and wellbeing of people in the workplace by removing or reducing risks.
- Comply with relevant legislative requirements and standards.
- Meet our legal and positive duties of care under the Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations.
- Provide training and resources so that workers can work safely and have the skills and knowledge to assist them to be healthy and well at home and in the workplace, particularly with respect of violence and abuse in the workplace.
- Consult with workers on health and safety matters.
- Provide ways to report incidents and hazards (including a Near Miss).



- Investigate health and safety matters and reduce or remove risks as far as reasonably practicable.
- Use risk, safety, critical incident, and disaster management methodologies to determine our response to Significant Health and Safety Events.
- Aim to continue to provide our essential services and minimise disruption to our services where possible during Significant Health and Safety Events and communicate any changes to those affected as soon and as simply as reasonably practicable.

## Definitions

### Officers

An officer includes:

- a director or secretary of a company
- someone who makes decisions, or is involved in making decisions, that significantly impact a company or a significant part of a company.
- someone who can significantly impact a company's financial situation.
- someone whose instructions or wishes are followed by the directors of a company (excluding people who give advice to the board in performing their professional roles or as consultants or advisors).

### Workers

A worker is any person who carries out work for us. This includes any person who works as:

- an employee
- trainee
- volunteer
- outworker
- apprentice
- work experience student
- contractor or sub-contractor
- an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor
- an employee of a labour hire company assigned to work for us.

### Other people

Other people are clients, visitors, and other people in the workplace or who may be put at risk from the work we carry out.

### Workplace

A workplace is a place where work is performed and includes any place a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. This includes tenant properties and common areas.

### Hazard

A hazard is a situation or thing, including work practices, that has the potential to cause harm to a person or damage property. A hazard can include physical and psychosocial factors that may cause harm to a person.



Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response which in turn can lead to psychological or physical harm. These could stem from:

- the way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed, and supervised.
- tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks.
- the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments, and
- social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

Examples of hazards include:

Physical hazards	Psychosocial hazards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diseases</li> <li>• Falling objects</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Hazardous chemicals</li> <li>• Hazardous manual tasks</li> <li>• Heat</li> <li>• Machinery and equipment</li> <li>• Slips, trips and falls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Role overload or underload</li> <li>• Exposure to traumatic events</li> <li>• Workplace/role conflict</li> <li>• Lack of role clarity</li> <li>• Low job control</li> <li>• Poor support and workplace relationships</li> <li>• Workplace violence</li> <li>• Harassment including sexual in nature</li> <li>• Remote or Isolated work</li> <li>• Inadequate reward and recognition</li> </ul>

### Incident

An incident is an event at a workplace that causes (or could have caused) harm to a person.

### Notifiable Incident

A Notifiable Incident means:

- the death of a person
- a serious injury or illness of a person (as defined by the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW))
- a dangerous incident (as defined by the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW))

We must ensure that the regulator and senior management are notified immediately after becoming aware of the incident and that a record is kept of each incident.

### Near Miss

A Near Miss is an unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness, or damage – but had the potential to do so.



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## Significant Health and Safety Events

In this Policy, the term Significant Health and Safety Events is used to describe major events that have the potential to impact the health, safety and well-being of our workers and other people as well as impacting our ability to deliver our services in the usual manner. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Outbreaks of communicable diseases including pandemics and epidemics.
- Major weather events such as storms, smoke haze, fire, and floods.
- Exposure to traumatic events.

A significant health and safety event may also be classified as a WHS incident, Critical Incident or Disaster.

## Duties

### Our duties

We have a legal duty to do as much as we reasonably can to ensure the health and safety of workers while they are at work. We must also do as much as we reasonably can to make sure that work performed for us doesn't put the health and safety of other people at risk, particularly violence and abuse from customers.

### Officers

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.
- Educate all managers on de-escalating challenging situations.
- Supporting people after an incident through offering group and one on one counselling and debrief sessions by trained trauma clinicians, or organisational psychologists.
- Encouraging employees to debrief with colleagues and managers.
- Promoting self-care strategies to help manage stress, lower risk of illness, and increase energy levels to better adapt and handle impacts of difficult situations.
- 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.

### Workers

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 WHS.



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- Follow any reasonable policy, procedure or direction about WHS.
  - Complete WHS inspections and audits as required.
  - Report aggressive, threatening, abusive or violent behaviours by customers using our hazard and incident reporting procedures.
  - Attend WHS training and any other training directed by us to develop skills in responding to challenging behaviours including threats, aggression, and intimidation.
  - Talk to their manager, their Head of Department, a representative of the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team or the People and Culture Team or reach out to our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider about any issues/feelings regarding their experience of 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 and could happen anywhere in multiple ways.

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 person 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.
- Ensuring mobile devices have sufficient charge and enable the use of SHEQSY – Lone Worker Safety App.
- Follow all principles from relevant training on dealing with aggressive behaviours and abuse prevention

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 in-line with our Work Health and Safety and/or Critical Incidents policies and procedures. All incidents must be formally reported via the Safety Module system on One Housing.

We will offer internal support and encourage workers to contact our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 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 as soon as reasonably practicable 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 person who saw or heard any part of the incident are encouraged to provide a witness statement, or participate in an investigation as part of follow through of the incident and assist with identifying any contributory factors, and corrective actions. Workers are encouraged to come forward and won't be discriminated or victimised for reporting incidents or hazards resulting from workplace violence.



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Workers who experience aggression or violent behaviour from our customers may 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 Health, Safety & Wellbeing team, or a member of the People, Capability and Performance team so that we can listen and understand what occurred/how they feel/consider appropriate controls including training, debrief and/or other support. Workers can also contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) directly.

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

### Relevant legislation, regulations or standards

- [Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment \(Respect at Work\) Act 2022](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Heavy Vehicle National Law \(NSW\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2022 \(the NSW Regulation\) 2022](#)

### Policy Information

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