



Mildura Rural City Council

Workplace Violence Policy

Policy – CP009

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1. The purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide Council with an organisational approach to providing a safe workplace that is free from violence and aggression.

The policy provides a framework for the prevention and management of workplace aggression and violence, and the promotion of a 'zero tolerance' culture.

2. Policy Statement

Violence towards staff is a significant occupational health and safety (OH&S) issue and all staff have a role in, and responsibility for, maintaining a safe workplace.

All managers, supervisors, staff and Councillors are responsible for promoting a workplace free of aggressive behaviour and violence. This includes the management of incidents involving aggressive behaviour and violence.

Workplace violence impacts on staff and their ability to perform their work. It also impacts on the families of staff and the community as a whole.

Mildura Rural City Council is committed to supporting staff and Councillors who are exposed to, or have witnessed, aggression and violence in the workplace.

Council does not tolerate any type of workplace violence committed by or against staff or Councillors.

Staff and Councillors are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities.

This list of behaviours provides examples of conduct that is prohibited:

- causing physical injury to another person
- making threatening remarks
- displaying aggressive or hostile behaviour that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress

- intentionally damaging employer property or the property of another employee
- possessing a weapon while on Council property or while on Council business
- committing acts motivated by, or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence.

Both employees and non-employees engaged in violent acts against Council staff or Councillors will be reported to the Police and/or other appropriate authorities.

3. Background

Council has an obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace where people are not subjected to aggression and/or violence. Further, in being a White Ribbon accredited organisation, Council:

- requires all people in the organisation to be treated with respect
- has a zero tolerance for violence and threats at work or work-related events by the organisation's staff or Councillors against other people or property
- has clear reporting and response practices that are in place for when violence occurs or is suspected
- encourages all staff and Councillors to take appropriate action when an issue of violence occurs or is suspected.

4. Principles

- Council promotes 'zero tolerance' of aggression and violence both by and against Council staff and Councillors.
- All staff and Councillors have a responsibility to promote a workplace free from violence.
- Reporting of incidents is strongly encouraged.
- All incidents will be investigated with a view to managing the specific incident and preventing future incidents. Any staff member or Councillor determined to have committed such acts will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- Non-employees engaged in violent acts will be reported to the proper authorities and fully prosecuted.

Risk Reduction Measures

While Council does not expect Councillors and staff to be skilled at identifying potentially dangerous persons, Councillors and staff are expected to exercise good judgment and to inform the OH&S Team or Human Resources where any person exhibits behaviour or a matter escalates that could lead to a potentially dangerous situation. Such behaviour includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- discussing dangerous weapons and/or bringing such weapons into the workplace or worksite
- displaying overt signs or extreme stress, resentment, hostility, or anger
- making threatening remarks

- displaying irrational or inappropriate behaviour
- previous incident history.

The OH&S Team will identify and maintain a list of workplace violence incidents and in consultation with staff and Management design risk reduction plans and responses for possible emergency situations. This may include the use of duress alarms, body cameras, lone worker alarm and location identification devices, global positioning system (GPS) and tracking devices in Council fleet and plant vehicles, and operational procedure changes such as regular check-ins and staff not working alone in certain situations.

Members of the public may be banned from Council facilities, meetings and functions.

Reporting Procedure

Any potentially dangerous situation must be immediately reported to a supervisor, OH&S or Human Resources. Reports can be made anonymously and all reported incidents will be investigated.

Any actual incident must be immediately reported to a supervisor and the OH&S Team.

Reports or incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately and information will be disclosed to others only on a need-to-know basis.

Staff and Councillors involved in a situation have access to the Employee Assistance Program.

The results of investigations will be discussed with staff and Councillors involved. Council will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation.

Non-employees engaged in violent acts will be reported to the police.

5. Responsibilities

CEO, General Managers, Managers, Coordinators and Team Leaders

The CEO, General Managers, Managers, Coordinators and Team Leaders are responsible for:

- demonstrating organisational concern for staff and Councillors' emotional and physical health and safety
- ensuring all staff and Councillors understand their obligations
- providing a program (Employee Assistance Program) of medical care, psychological counselling and debriefing for employees experiencing or witnessing assaults and other violent incidents
- encouraging employees to report violent incidents promptly
- treating all reports of workplace aggression and violence seriously and responding appropriately

- where required, in collaboration with the OH&S Team, investigating in a timely manner, documenting findings and taking appropriate action to both remedy the situation and prevent future incidents
- implementing risk reduction measures and controls.

Staff and Councillors

Staff and Councillors are responsible for:

- understanding and complying with this policy and any other safety and/or security measures in place by Council
- promoting 'zero tolerance' of workplace aggression and violence, including actively demoting the myth that aggression and violence 'are part of the job'
- participating in employee feedback covering safety and security concerns, which will inform the development of appropriate governance, prevention, awareness, response, reporting, policy and process
- immediately reporting violent incidents or potential for violence to their manager, supervisor or the OH&S Team
- participating in continuing education programs that cover techniques to recognise escalating agitation, assaultive behaviour, or criminal intent.

6. Definitions

Workplace violence Workplace violence can be any incident where a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of, their work. The violence can be either directed at the person or as a result of witnessing violence against someone else.

The definition of workplace violence covers a broad range of actions and behaviours that create a risk to the health and safety of all workers.

Examples include:

- biting, spitting, scratching, hitting, kicking
- punching, pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing
- throwing objects
- verbal threats
- aggravated assault
- any form of indecent physical contact
- threatening someone with a weapon or armed robbery.

Definition source:

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/workplace-violence>

7. Legislation and other references

7.1 Legislation

For further information related to this policy see:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

7.2 Documents

This Policy is implemented in conjunction with the following documents:

- Discipline Policy (OP033)
- Workplace Surveillance Policy (OP148).

8. Risk Assessment Reference

Risk Category	✓	Risk Category	✓
Asset Management		Financial Sustainability	
Committees		Human Resource Management	✓
Compliance – Legal & Regulatory	✓	Leadership & Organisational Culture	✓
Contract Management		Occupational Health & Safety	✓
Contract Tendering & Procurement		Organisational Risk Management	✓
Corporate Governance		Project Management	
Environmental Sustainability		Public Image and Reputation	✓