



# Psychological Safety Policy

## Purpose and Scope

ANC is committed to providing a safe work environment for all workplace participants by ensuring their psychological safety and wellbeing.

ANC acknowledges that it has a duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the psychological health of workplace participants, in the same way that their physical health must be taken care of. It recognises that a mentally healthy workplace is a key driver for organisational success and sustainability

In addition, all workplace participants have a responsibility for workplace health and safety, specifically ensuring reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others.

This Policy is not intended to be contractual in nature.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors) of ANC, collectively referred to as “workplace participants”.

## Policy Statement

A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is defined as one that promotes workplace participants’ mental health and well-being, protects mental health by reducing work-related risk factors and actively prevents and addresses mental illness and injury from occurring.

The attributes of a psychologically healthy workplace include:

- Open and honest leadership
- Fair and respectful culture
- Inclusion and influence
- Good job design
- Prioritising mental health
- Work/life balance
- Employee development
- Workload management
- Mental health support

## Risks of a Psychologically Unsafe Workplace

The risk to individuals and to workplaces from a psychological injury could include:

- Poor individual health and/or reduced functioning
- Increased staff absenteeism
- Potential high staff turnover
- Low morale and motivation
- Lost productivity
- Inability to deliver objectives
- Increased Workers’ Compensation claims

## What can Cause Psychological Injuries

In general, undertaking work activities are accepted to be good for a person’s psychological and physical well-being. Good work is good for well-being. However, there are aspects of the workplace that, if not appropriately managed, have the potential to negatively affect an individual’s mental health, sense of well-being, physical health, as well as the effectiveness of an organization to fulfil its operational requirements.

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Workplace factors that may contribute to psychological injuries include:

- elements of the work environment;
- management practices; or
- the way that work is organised or designed.

The psychological well-being of a workforce can be enhanced by minimising the impact of known workplace risk factors and maximising the impact of potential protective factors.

A risk factor is a condition, behaviour or attribute that may increase the risk of injury or illness.

A protective factor is a characteristic associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact.

In order to create a more psychologically healthy workplace, strategies are needed at the individual, team and organisational level to eliminate or reduce risk factors and promote protective factors.

### What is a Psychosocial Hazard

In relation to work, a psychosocial hazard is a workplace factor, such as an adverse workplace interaction or condition of work, that compromises a worker's health and wellbeing.

If addressed appropriately these factors have the potential to positively influence the mental health, psychological safety and engagement of workplace participants. If these factors are not managed appropriately, they have the potential to lead to psychological and/or physical injury.

Psychosocial hazards can include:

- high and low job demands
- low job control
- poor support
- poor organisational change management
- poor organisational justice
- low recognition and reward
- low role clarity or role conflict
- poor workplace relationships
- remote and isolated work
- violent or traumatic events

### Psychosocial Risk Management

Psychosocial risks can be managed in the same systematic way as other workplace health and safety risks.

A risk management approach includes:

1. Understanding the key psychosocial hazards
2. Undertaking a risk management process (identify, prioritise and control)
3. Undertake meaningful consultation with staff
4. Ensure appropriate resources and processes to control risks
5. Maintain, monitor and review control measures.

### Levels of Intervention for Psychosocial Hazards

Strategies to address psychosocial hazards in the workplace can be addressed at the primary, secondary or tertiary levels of intervention.

Primary interventions are targeted at the organisational level, with an emphasis on the need to identify and manage causes and practices within the organisation that may be contributing negatively to worker well-being.

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Secondary interventions are primarily aimed at improving worker strengths and capability, including education and training, as well as the provision of resources to assist with individuals with stress management, resilience, interpersonal skills and conflict management.

Tertiary interventions are supportive steps implemented after an injury or illness has occurred, including facilitating appropriate rehabilitation or return to work programs, provision of an Employee Assistance Program etc.

The goal of any organisation should be to manage the risk at the source, rather than rely only on interventions to assist workers after an injury has occurred.

### **Promote a Positive Workplace Culture**

Workplace culture is the collective view of employees. Workplace culture can shape how people interact and engage with others, how things get done and what is acceptable behaviour.

Where there is a negative workplace culture, there may be at greater risk of exposure to psychosocial hazards. A toxic or hostile work environment will likely result in poor workplace relationships, increased worker apathy, stress and burnout, as well as increased absenteeism, attrition and reduced organisational outcomes.

In contrast, a positive workplace culture can boost an individual's wellness and help serve as a protective factor against psychosocial risk.

Applying psychosocial risk management measures can help to shape a positive workplace culture. Establishing a culture of caring and trust through supportive leadership is also essential.

### **Leadership competencies for healthy workplaces**

Leaders play a vital role in the psychological health and safety of workers and creating a positive workplace culture. Leaders with a 'people focus' can help protect and buffer workers against psychological injury and enhance individual well-being at work. Where possible, supervisors and managers should develop and utilise the following competencies to support healthy workplace environments.

### **Communication and Collaboration**

To support the growth and development of workers clear exchange of information is required. Leaders need to be transparent in decision making, change management, feedback and what a worker needs to do their job successfully.

Leaders should encourage inclusion by getting to know their teams and inviting contributions from all team members. Importantly, regular and timely feedback and recognition is a significant contributor to a worker's well-being in the workplace. In addition, encouraging collaborative efforts will also help to support a worker's success and well-being, as well as a positive workplace culture.

### **Positive role modelling**

Leaders need to act in ways to support the values and behavioural expectations in the workplace. By serving as a facilitator of 'psychologically safe' interactions a leader can reinforce expectations and trust within the workplace. Additionally, role-modelling appropriate psychological self-care, including self-regulation and work-life balance, will support workers to enhance their own psychological well-being.

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### **Problem solving and conflict management**

Leaders should demonstrate clear, fair and consistent approaches to resolving conflict. Facilitating effective discussion, consultation and seeking worker contributions to problem solving is also a sign of healthy leadership.

### **Safety and security**

Security and safety involves supporting a safe environment through proactive, prompt, and effective responses to any threats to psychological or physical safety. Along with supporting physical safety, appropriate environmental conditions and security, leaders should ensure team cultures that encourage trust and connection with others. A psychologically safe work environment limits 'interpersonal risk', where a worker feels encouraged to speak up around sensitive issues or share novel ideas without concern of negative judgement or consequences.

### **Fairness and integrity**

Effective leadership involves engaging workers in an honest, sincere and ethical manner. Fairness and integrity involves leadership that is transparent, and consistent, where there is fairness and equity in decision-making.

### **Promote wellbeing for the individual**

In addition to addressing psychological risks at the organisational level, as part of an integrated approach to psychological safety and well-being in the workplace, consideration of how to enhance individual well-being is also important. While not a substitute for addressing psychological hazards at the source (i.e. addressing organisational factors) secondary interventions aimed at enhancing individual strengths and capabilities should be considered.

This can be achieved by supporting staff to participate in programs or initiatives designed to build effective skills in coping resources, managing stress, self-awareness, effective communication skills and resilience.

Promotion of, supporting and role-modelling flexibility and work-life balance suitable to the individual's personal circumstances can not only improve an individual's level of wellbeing, it can also provide numerous benefits to the organisation, including employee retention, engagement and morale.

In addition, building organisational capacity through training and education of staff in recognising and supporting mental health concerns can assist addressing individual wellbeing concerns at the early intervention stage.

Ensuring workers have access to and awareness of support services available to them, such as the [Employee Assistance Program](#) for employees at ANC, is also an important aspect of an integrated approach to psychological safety and well-being in the workplace.

### **Variation and review**

ANC reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time. Unless altered earlier, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

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