



## Policy

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### 16 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM POLICY

Policy Reference No:

File Reference No: 22.112.5

Strategic Outcome: Good government

Date of Adoption: 20/11/2013

Date for Review: 01/10/2016

Responsible Officer: Enterprise and Risk Manager

#### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Berrigan Shire Council in its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment has recognised the need to provide adequate support for staff experiencing personal or work related problems by providing an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Council will enlist the services of an EAP provider to provide professional counselling services for all employees.

#### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline the provision of the EAP program;
- Define the parameters by which the EAP program is offered

#### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all paid employees of the Berrigan Shire Council immediately following appointment.

#### 4. OBJECTIVE

Council operations support ethical, transparent and accountable corporate governance.

#### 5. DEFINITIONS

**Organisational Referral** is when Council has identified a need, such as following an incident, and will arrange for EAP access.

**Self-Referral** is where the employee has identified a problem which they wish to discuss in a private and confidential setting without anyone in the organisation being involved in any way.



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**Suggested Referral** is when the option of accessing the EAP is made, usually by a Supervisor or Manager, or even a work colleague.

### 6. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

#### 6.1 EAP Provider

The Council will contract a regionally located provider to manage the EAP, independent of Council. The focus will be on providing professional counselling services that meet both the employee's and Council's needs.

The current EAP Provider for Council is Insight Health.

#### 6.2 EAP Procedure

The EAP offers assistance for problems such as:

- Relationship difficulties
- Divorce and separation
- Harassment and discrimination
- Conflict
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Work related problems
- Grief and bereavement
- Financial difficulties
- Stress and fatigue
- Emotional difficulties

The EAP is free of charge to all Berrigan Shire Council paid employees, up to a maximum of three visits in one calendar year. Any additional visits will be at the cost of the employee.

Use of the EAP can be through self-referral, suggested referral or organisational referral. Where the referral is either suggested or organisational, use of the EAP is at the discretion of the individual and is completely voluntary.

The EAP provider will make arrangements to meet with the individual employee usually at a location close to their place of residence, or at the provider's premises, however on occasion an alternative venue may need to be arranged. Under these circumstances travelling will be charged according to the EAP agreement between the Council and the provider.

Where a counsellor may suggest referral to a specialist agency, any costs associated with the referral are to be met by the employee.

##### 6.2.1 Leave Requirements



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Where an employee wishes to utilise the EAP service, normal leave procedures will apply. If the referral to the EAP is a suggested or organisational referral, arrangements regarding leave or leave with pay will be made with the affected employee/s.

### **6.2.2 Confidentiality**

A vital feature of the EAP is the confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy. No one needs to know that an employee is utilising the services of the EAP. Should an employee advise their supervisor that they are attending the EAP, he/she is required to observe strict confidentiality and to support the employee in accessing the EAP. No employee needs to discuss the reason for their visit with anyone unless they feel comfortable doing so.

Confidentiality also means that nobody, including the Council will receive information from the EAP provider concerning an individual situation.

Conversations and any information shared with a counsellor will be confidential and will not be communicated further unless written authorisation is given.

### **6.2.3 Reporting**

A report outlining service utilisation will be supplied in accordance with the EAP agreement between the Council and the provider. This report will maintain confidentiality and will not include personal information or information relating to specific issues.

Council will use the reports and liaise with the EAP provider to monitor the use and effectiveness of the service to ensure that:

- The principles of the EAP are being adhered to by all parties;
- Emphasis is placed on workplace preventative initiatives to address problems that become apparent;
- Complete confidentiality is maintained at all times and Council is meeting their obligations under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIPA) and the Privacy Management Plan (PMP);
- Access to the EAP is available and maintained.

### **6.2.4 Council Contact**

The EAP is facilitated by the Human Resource Officer. Information, direction, support and advice on the EAP service can be obtained by contacting the Human Resource Officer or making direct contact with the EAP Provider.

Contact details of the current EAP Provider are displayed on all noticeboards.



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### **7 RELATED POLICIES OR STRATEGIES**

Additional publications to be read in conjunction with this policy include:

- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- Local Government (State) Award 2010
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Internal Reporting Policy
- Equal Employment Opportunity, Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy
- Privacy Management Plan