



## Policy

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## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Strategic Outcome:	Good government
Policy type	Administrative
Date of Adoption:	20 July 2022 <span style="float: right;">Minute Number: 213</span>
Date for Review:	15 July 2026
Responsible Officer:	Human Resource Coordinator
Document Control:	Replaces Employee Assistance Program Policy adopted 21 June 2017
Delivery Program Link:	2.1.3 Council operations support ethical, transparent, and accountable corporate governance.

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

The 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 an EAP provider to provide professional counselling services for its workforce

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the provision of the EAP program and define the parameters by which the EAP program is offered.

### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- employees of Berrigan Shire Council,
- registered volunteers of Council's S355 Committees of Management, and
- current elected councillors.

### 4. OBJECTIVE

This policy is developed to assist the Council with the Delivery Program Objective:

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2.1.3 Council operations support ethical, transparent, and accountable corporate governance.

### 5. DEFINITIONS

**Organisational Referral:** when Council has identified a need, such as following an incident, and will arrange for EAP access this can be arranged at the employee's discretion

**Self-Referral:** 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

**Suggested Referral:** 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 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

#### 6.2 Council contact

The EAP is facilitated by the Human Resources Coordinator.

Information, direction, support and advice on the EAP service can be obtained by contacting the Human Resource Coordinator, Council's Contact Officers or by making direct contact with the EAP Provider.

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

#### 6.3 Procedure

The EAP offers assistance for problems such as:

- Relationship difficulties
- Divorce and separation
- Experience of Family and Domestic Violence
- Harassment and discrimination
- Conflict
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Work related problems
- Grief and bereavement



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- Financial difficulties
- Stress and fatigue
- Emotional difficulties

The EAP is free of charge up to a maximum of three visits in one calendar year, to all Berrigan Shire Council paid employees, registered volunteers of Council's S355 Committees of Management, and current elected members of Council. Any additional visits will be at the cost of the individual.

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 arrange to meet with the individual 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 individual.

### **6.4 Critical Incident and Debrief**

A critical incident is any event or series of events that is sudden, overwhelming, threatening or protracted. This may be an assault, threats, severe injury, death, fire or a bomb threat.

Critical incident stress management aims to help workers deal with emotional reactions that may result from involvement in or exposure to unusual workplace incidents

Debriefing is usually carried out within three to seven days of the critical incident, when workers have had enough time to take in the experience. Within 24 hours of a critical incident Council will make arrangements for a critical incident debrief and ensure workers are provided immediate support if required and kept informed of the process.

Debriefing is not counselling. It is a structured voluntary discussion aimed at putting an abnormal event into perspective. It offers workers clarity about the critical incident they have experienced and assists them to establish a process for recovery.

### **6.5 Leave**

Where an employee wishes to use 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.



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### 6.6 Confidentiality

A vital feature of the EAP is the confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy. No one needs to know that an individual is utilising the services of the EAP. Should an individual confide in or advise somebody within Council that they are attending the EAP, they are required to observe strict confidentiality and where possible offer support.

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.

## 7. RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

### 7.1 Legislation

- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- Local Government (State) Award 2020

### 7.2 Council policies and guidelines

- Governance Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Internal Reporting Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Discrimination, Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace Policy
- Family and Domestic Violence Policy
- Privacy Management Plan

## 8. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

All Records must be kept in accordance with Council's Records Management Policy (currently under development) and destroyed as per the General Retention and Disposal Authority: Local Government Records (GA39).

## 9. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

This policy (procedure) will be evaluated and reviewed at least once every four (4) years as per Council's Governance Policy (currently under development) or as required.



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### 10. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

A number of legislative instruments require Councils to have the policy available for inspection at Council's principal office (i.e. Policies made under Part 3, of the Local Government Act 1993). Each document should therefore state the ways in which the policy is available including any relevant fees and charges for access to such policy. An example of the required statement is provided below:

This policy will be available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours as per the requirements of section 18 (c) of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and section 167 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Access to the policy in digital format is free and is available on Council's website <https://www.berriganshire.nsw.gov.au/>

Printed copies of the document are available at Council's principal office (address noted below) and are subject to Council's Fees and Charges.

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### 11. VERSION CONTROL

Version Number	Date	Summary	Responsible Officer
1.0		New Policy document	Enterprise Risk Manager
1.1	20.07.2022	Review / inclusion of critical debrief	HR Coordinator

### APPENDICES

Nil