

WORK HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL POLICY



POLICY TITLE:	WORK HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY		
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AUTHORISED BY:	Chief Executive Officer	DATE REVIEWED:	17/04/2024

SUMMARY

This policy outlines ARC's approach to ensuring a safe, healthy, and sustainable workplace that complies with WHS regulations and aligns with our organisational values.

PURPOSE

This policy is designed to uphold ARC Disability Services Inc.'s (ARC) commitment to maintaining the highest standards of health, safety, and environmental responsibility. It aims to comprehensively address the risks associated with our operations and ensure a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment for our staff, participants, subcontractors, and volunteers.

By aligning with the requirements of Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations, this policy covers essential areas including workplace attire, safety audits, and environmental management practices. Through proactive risk management, continuous improvement, and strict adherence to legal obligations, we strive to not only mitigate hazards but also foster a culture of safety and environmental responsibility that aligns with our organisational values and operational needs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, board members, volunteers, participants, and subcontractors of ARC Disability Services Inc. It encompasses all operational areas, including workplaces, service delivery sites, and external activities.

Individuals covered by this policy are obligated to protect their own and others' health and safety by identifying hazards and risks, managing work health and safety risks, and implementing infection control measures. They are also expected to consult with supervisors or management about these risks.

IMPLEMENTATION

All ARC operations must adhere to the Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld), NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework, and the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld). This establishes the framework for maintaining safety standards across all activities and locations.

ARC will maintain a safe and healthy working environment at all premises, whether owned or used for activities. This includes conducting regular risk assessments and ensuring that all premises comply with safety standards.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **All Employees and Volunteers:** Expected to actively maintain a safe work environment by adhering to ARC's safety protocols. They must report safety hazards, incidents, or near-misses immediately using the specified reporting forms and procedures.
- **Management and Coordination Team:** Responsible for the enforcement of safety measures, addressing any non-compliance issues, and ensuring that all personnel are familiar with the safety protocols. They must also oversee the safety of premises and ensure compliance with risk assessments.
- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO):** As the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), the CEO holds the overarching responsibility for health and safety across ARC, ensuring that safety standards are met and resources for safety measures are adequately provided.
- **ARC's Board:** Sets the strategic direction for health and safety at ARC, ensuring that safety is integral to the organisation's culture and governance.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	<i>Uncontrolled if Printed</i>	Page 1 of 6

SAFETY PRINCIPLES

At ARC we uphold a strong commitment to safety by adhering to key principles and specific guidelines to ensure a secure and healthy work environment for all.

1. **Proactive Risk Management:** Employees are expected to actively identify and mitigate potential risks, contributing to solutions that enhance workplace safety and prevent incidents.
2. **Maintain Awareness:** Team members must stay aware of their surroundings and the potential hazards of their tasks, taking appropriate actions to mitigate risks.
3. **Clear and Open Communication:** Our workplace encourages open discussions about safety without fear of repercussions. Employees should promptly report any unsafe conditions to their supervisors or via established reporting channels.
4. **Personal Responsibility and Accountability:** Employees are responsible for following safety protocols, using personal protective equipment as needed, and ensuring their actions maintain a safe work environment for all.
5. **Compliance with Safety Standards:** Adhering to both national and organizational safety standards is mandatory for all team members, ensuring both collective and individual safety.
6. **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** We value and encourage employee feedback to continually enhance our safety practices. Regular policy reviews are conducted, integrating staff feedback to ensure our practices are effective and up to date.

SAFETY DO'S

- **Do** actively participate in identifying potential risks in your work environment and suggest preventive measures.
- **Do** attend all required training sessions and follow the safety protocols diligently to ensure your safety and the safety of others.
- **Do** use the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided, ensuring it is worn correctly and maintained in good condition.
- **Do** immediately report any incidents, hazards, or near-misses to the appropriate supervisor or through the established reporting systems.
- **Do** keep your work area clean and free from hazards and ensure that all pathways and exits are clear.
- **Do** participate in meetings about safety and engage with any other communication regarding workplace safety.

SAFETY DON'TS

- **Don't** ignore or bypass any safety protocols or procedures, as they are designed to protect everyone in the workplace.
- **Don't** use any equipment or machinery for which you have not been trained, as improper use can lead to accidents.
- **Don't** neglect to wear or improperly use personal protective equipment required for your tasks.
- **Don't** withhold information regarding unsafe conditions or practices. Reporting them helps prevent potential accidents.
- **Don't** engage in unsafe behaviours, such as rushing through tasks or taking unnecessary risks.
- **Don't** ignore signs of health issues related to your work. Reporting these symptoms ensures that appropriate measures are taken.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 2 of 6

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- **Work Attire:** Employees must wear attire appropriate for the tasks they are performing, considering safety, climate, professional image, and potential hazards. This includes the requirement for sensible, closed-in, flat footwear to prevent slips, trips, and falls, especially in operational areas where direct support is provided.
- **Specific Footwear Requirements:** Footwear must be adapted based on the activity and identified risks, such as direct care scenarios or environments with heightened safety risks (e.g., wet surfaces, uneven terrain). For activities like swimming or where cultural practices dictate, footwear may be more open but must be evaluated through a risk assessment to ensure safety. In instances where footwear must be removed, a risk assessment is required, and the relevant coordinator must be contacted.
- **Awareness of Clothing Hazards:** Employees should be conscious of how their clothing choices can impact their work and safety. Loose clothing, jewellery, and hair should be secured to prevent any interference or hazards during work activities. Nails should be trimmed to a safe length to avoid harm or infection risks when providing personal care.
- **Sun Protection and Outdoor Work:** When working outdoors, employees must wear sun-smart clothing and protective gear to safeguard against environmental elements like sun exposure.
- **PPE Compliance:** Employees are required to use personal protective equipment necessary for their roles. ARC will provide all necessary PPE, which must be maintained in good condition by the user.

HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Health and Safety Inspections at ARC Disability Services Inc. are a proactive safety measure designed to identify and mitigate potential hazards before they lead to incidents, ensuring all work environments, including those not directly owned by ARC, are safe for employees, volunteers, and participants..

ARC-OWNED OR LEASED PREMISES AND SIL ARRANGEMENTS

The Quality and Safety Team conducts detailed annual health and safety inspections to ensure these areas remain free from risks and hazards. Six months after each annual inspection, a check-in is conducted to review the progress on actions implemented and prepare for the upcoming visit. A comprehensive report detailing any identified hazards, assessing risk levels, and outlining recommendations for risk mitigation is provided to the applicable coordinator and/or manager after each assessment.

PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL LOCATIONS

These locations are considered worksites when ARC employees conduct support and are subject to the same rigorous safety standards. Before initiating support at a participant's home, a coordinator is required to complete a home visit to assess any potential risks and hazards. Subsequent reviews are conducted only if there are significant changes, such as a participant moving home or other notable concerns, or bi-annually if the risk level necessitates due to the nature of the support required.

During the assessment, consultation with the participant and/or carer is crucial, and any identified risks must be addressed to ensure it is safe for the support worker to proceed. If a risk is deemed too great, support is withheld until the risk is mitigated to an acceptable level. All assessments require a final sign-off by a manager or Team Leader to proceed with support. Alternate coordinators may conduct assessments if needed to maintain positive relationships with participants.

CONTINUOUS MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT

The effectiveness of actions taken post-inspection is continuously monitored through scheduled follow-ups and staff feedback. This ongoing evaluation ensures that ARC can maintain and enhance its safety standards, adapting as necessary to protect all associated with its services.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 3 of 6

TRAINING AND COMPLIANCE

At ARC, we regard education and training as fundamental components of a safe working environment. All employees undergo comprehensive training on a variety of safety protocols designed to maintain high standards of workplace safety. This training is structured into several key modules, each targeting specific aspects of safety and compliance:

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Employees receive training on the correct actions to take during various emergency situations, such as fires, medical emergencies, and natural disasters. The training focuses on safe evacuation techniques, the use of emergency equipment, and coordination with emergency response teams, ensuring that everyone is prepared to act swiftly and effectively to minimise risks.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Employees are trained to recognise potential hazards within their work environment and understand the processes for assessing these risks. The training includes methods for reporting hazards and the steps to take in mitigating them. This proactive approach helps in maintaining a safe workplace by addressing risks before they lead to accidents or injuries.

INFECTION CONTROL

Given the importance of hygiene and disease prevention, especially in settings involving close physical contact or shared spaces, infection control training is critical. This training covers the fundamentals of how infections spread, the importance of personal hygiene, and the proper use of sanitation practices and equipment. Employees learn specific protocols for preventing infection transmission in the workplace.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

This training educates employees on the importance of PPE, how to properly use it, and when it is necessary. Training includes fitting, wearing, and maintaining equipment such as gloves, masks, eye protection, and gowns. The aim is to ensure that employees can protect themselves effectively against workplace hazards that cannot be eliminated or controlled by other means.

MANUAL HANDLING TRAINING

A significant component of our safety training focuses on manual handling, which is crucial for positions requiring the physical movement of objects or people. Employees learn the correct techniques for lifting, carrying, and setting down objects, which helps prevent musculoskeletal injuries. This training also covers the use of aids and equipment designed to assist with manual handling tasks, ensuring that all personnel are prepared to handle their duties safely.

ONGOING EDUCATION

To reinforce safety concepts and ensure that all employees are up to date with the latest safety standards and practices, training is conducted on a regular basis. Refresher courses are undertaken as per the training schedule, or more frequently if significant changes in safety protocols or legislation occur.

CONSULTATION AND REPORTING

Regular consultations with employees are integral to our health and safety management system. These consultations are structured to provide a platform where employees can discuss health and safety issues openly and contribute to the development of safety measures.

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Employees at all levels are encouraged to play an active role in safety management by reporting safety concerns and incidents as soon as they arise. ARC has established multiple channels to facilitate easy and confidential communication between the workforce and management. These include digital reporting systems, a dedicated feedback email address, direct discussion with their supervisor or with the Quality and Safety Team.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	<i>Uncontrolled if Printed</i>	Page 4 of 6

Feedback Loops and Reporting Mechanisms

Feedback mechanisms are put in place to ensure that all reported issues are followed up on and that employees receive feedback on the outcomes. This not only helps in resolving issues more effectively but also builds trust in the safety processes at ARC. Information generated from employee feedback and incident reports are reviewed during Leadership meetings and drive policy adjustments and safety training updates.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

ARC is committed to minimising our environmental impact across all aspects of our operations. We recognise that environmental sustainability is integral to responsible business operations and to the long-term health of the communities we support. To achieve this, we focus on:

- **Waste Reduction:** Implementing recycling programs and reducing unnecessary consumption of materials.
- **Energy Conservation:** Investing in energy-efficient appliances, lighting systems and solar electricity generation.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Promoting the use of digital documents to minimise paper use and encouraging the recycling of office and operational supplies.

PSYCHOSOCIAL WORKPLACE SAFETY

ARC recognises the importance of addressing psychosocial factors to ensure a safe and supportive work environment. This policy should be read alongside our *Inclusive Workplace Policy*, *Respectful Workplace Policy* and *Stress Management Policy*, which outline our commitment to promoting mental health and addressing psychosocial hazards.

- We prioritise the psychological well-being of our employees, volunteers, participants, and contractors by fostering a culture of respect, support, and open communication.
- Our approach includes measures to prevent workplace stress, bullying, harassment, discrimination, and other psychosocial risks, ensuring a workplace free from such behaviours.
- Employees are encouraged to report any concerns related to psychosocial hazards to their supervisors or the Human Resources Team for prompt resolution and support.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Duty of Care Dignity of Risk and the Least Restrictive Alternative Policy
- Emergency and Disaster Management Policy
- Fire Safety Management Policy
- Inclusive Workplace Policy
- Infectious Disease and Emergency Health Management Policy
- Manual Handling Policy
- Respectful Workplace Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Swimming Policy
- Stress Management Policy
- Training and Professional Development Policy
- Working from Home Policy
- Workplace Rehabilitation Policy

REFERENCES

- Disability Services Act 2006 (Queensland)
- NDIS Act 2013 (Commonwealth)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Commonwealth)
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Commonwealth)
- Model Codes of Practice <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation/codes-practice>

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 5 of 6

WORK HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL POLICY



AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Keast'.

Benjamin Keast

Chief Executive Officer

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	<i>Uncontrolled if Printed</i>	Page 6 of 6

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