



Councillor Obligations for CEO Psychological Safety Policy



Yarriambiack
SHIRE COUNCIL

Councillor Obligations for CEO Psychological Safety Policy

Yarriambiack Shire Council encourages a working environment which promotes gender equality and models non-violent and respectful relationships.

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1 Objective

The objective of this Policy is to ensure that Councillors clearly understand and comply with their obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025*, which came into effect on 01 December 2025. In their role as the governing body of the Council, Councillors are the employer of the Chief Executive Officer and therefore have a legal and ethical responsibility to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a healthy and safe working environment that supports psychological safety. This Policy seeks to promote awareness, accountability and appropriate conduct in support of a respectful, safe and psychologically healthy workplace.

2 Responsibility

2.1 The Council

The Council, as the employer of the Chief Executive Officer, must, so far as is reasonably practicable, identify psychosocial hazards that may impact psychological health in the workplace. This includes the responsibility to identify, assess, control and regularly review psychosocial risks in accordance with legislative requirements. These obligations rest with the Council collectively and cannot be delegated.

The Council will ensure appropriate records are maintained to demonstrate due diligence in the identification and management of psychosocial risks, including through documented prevention planning.

2.2 The Mayor

The Mayor, as the leader of the Council, has a specific responsibility to ensure that all Councillors are appropriately informed of this Policy, understand their individual and collective obligations, and act in a manner consistent with its requirements to support a safe, respectful and psychologically healthy working environment.

The Mayor is also responsible for regularly conducting wellbeing check-ins with the Chief Executive Officer to support open communication, identify any emerging psychosocial concerns, and promote the ongoing psychological health and wellbeing of the role. Refer to section 7 of this Policy for further information.

2.3 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer has a responsibility to take reasonable care for their own psychological health, to participate in consultation and psychosocial risk management processes, and to promptly raise any psychosocial hazards or concerns that may affect their role.

2.4 Governance Support Officer

The Governance Support Officer is appointed to provide administrative and procedural assistance to Councillors in relation to their obligations under the relevant regulations. This includes supporting the documentation, recording and retention of information associated with psychosocial risk assessment processes and the ongoing maintenance of this Policy.

While the Council retains sole and nondelegable responsibility for compliance with its legislative obligations, appropriate support and assistance will be provided by the Governance Support Officer to facilitate effective implementation and oversight. This includes supporting the completion, updating, secure storage and retention of psychosocial hazard prevention plans prepared in relation to the Chief Executive Officer role.

2.5 Independent Advisor of the CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee

The Independent Advisor of the CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee provides independent, procedural and governance advice to support a fair and robust CEO performance review process. This includes assisting the Committee to ensure the Chief Executive Officer position description remains current, accurate and reflective of the role's responsibilities, and encouraging appropriate discussion of potential and current psychosocial hazards relevant to the role.

3 Policy Statement and Scope

Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to fostering and maintaining a respectful, safe and psychologically healthy working environment. The Council recognises that psychological health is an essential component of occupational health and safety and that psychosocial hazards, if not appropriately managed, can cause harm to individuals and the organisation.

In their role as the governing body and employer of the Chief Executive Officer, Councillors have a shared responsibility to model appropriate behaviour and to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that their actions, decisions and interactions do not create or contribute to psychosocial risks. This Policy affirms the Council's commitment to meeting its obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025* and to promoting a culture of respect, accountability and ethical leadership.

The Policy operates alongside, and is to be read in conjunction with, relevant Council policies, the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and legislative requirements relating to occupational health and safety, workplace behaviour and human rights.

This Policy does not replace or limit any statutory obligations but provides a governance framework to support Councillors in meeting their legal and ethical responsibilities for psychological safety within the Council's workplace.

3.1 Guiding Principles

The principles outlined below guide the implementation and application of this Policy.

Principle 1	Psychological health is treated with the same importance as physical health and safety.
Principle 2	Psychosocial hazards will be proactively identified and addressed, not only after harm occurs.
Principle 3	Controls will prioritise higher-order measures that address work design, systems, management practices, and the work environment. Training or information will not be relied upon as the sole or primary control unless higher-order measures are not reasonably practicable.
Principle 4	Higher-order controls that address work design, governance systems and employer behaviours are prioritised.
Principle 5	Consultation with the CEO will occur so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to confidentiality and power imbalances. Respectful behaviour and constructive engagement, including in meetings and public interactions, are essential controls for managing psychosocial risk.
Principle 6	Appropriate records will be maintained to evidence due diligence and support continuous improvement.

4 Psychosocial Hazards

Psychosocial hazards include any factors arising from work that have the potential to cause psychological harm. Key categories of psychosocial hazards relevant to this Policy are outlined in the table below.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Work Design	The equipment, content and organisation of the CEO's tasks, activities, relationships and responsibilities.
Systems of Work	Overarching processes and frameworks that define how work is planned, organised and done including policies, organisational structure and staff expertise.
Management of Work	Levels of responsibility and control of their work, including structure, task allocation, priorities, performance measures, resource allocation, new work arrangements or technologies (flexible work, impact of AI).
Carrying Out the Work	How, when and where the work is done, the physical and cognitive demands of the work, whether long hours required at times, work demands on sleep/personal time, periods of sustained physical, mental or emotional effort.
Personal or Work Interactions	Social and collaborative aspects of work including teamwork, communication, relationships among employees, interactions Councillors, members of the public and key stakeholders in doing their day-to-day job.

4.1 Typical Psychosocial Hazards for CEO

The psychosocial hazards outlined below are non-exhaustive and are intended to provide an indicative overview of potential and commonly occurring psychosocial hazards relevant to the role of the Chief Executive Officer.

- Aggression, threats or violence from members of the public, including in-person interactions, telephone calls, written correspondence, and online or social media engagement.
- Bullying, intimidation or other unreasonable behaviours arising in the course of, or in connection with, Council business, including during Council or committee meetings.
- Sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or gendered violence, including online harassment or inappropriate communications.
- Exposure to traumatic events or distressing content, such as disaster response and recovery activities, family violence matters, or community tragedies.
- Excessive job demands, including unrealistic timeframes, sustained periods of high workload, workload peaks, and ongoing or excessive after-hours work.
- Limited control over work schedules or commitments, including inadequate organisational support or resourcing.
- Remote or isolated work arrangements, including travelling alone, attending events without support, or working from home in isolation.
- Poor workplace relationships, including conflict, incivility, reputational harm, and exposure to public or media scrutiny.

The table below provides examples of psychosocial hazards and potential control measures that may be implemented, where reasonably practicable.

Psychosocial Hazard	Primary Control Measures (Higher-Order Where Reasonably Practicable)
Aggression, threats or violence from members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear protocols for managing aggressive behaviour, including escalation pathways and zero tolerance statements. • Security and safety planning for public meetings and high-risk engagements.
Bullying, intimidation or unreasonable behaviour in Council business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear behavioural standards through Codes of Conduct and meeting protocols. • Strong chairing practices and procedural fairness in meetings.
Sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or gendered violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit prohibition of harassment and gendered violence within governance frameworks. • Leadership modelling of respectful conduct and accountability.
Exposure to traumatic events or distressing content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work design measures to limit repeated or prolonged exposure where possible. • Debriefing arrangements and access to wellbeing supports following traumatic events.
Excessive job demands and sustained high workloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic performance expectations and agreed priorities set by Council. • Monitoring workload patterns and limiting unnecessary after-hours demands.
Limited job control or inadequate support/resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater autonomy over scheduling and commitments where practicable. • Adequate administrative and governance support.
Remote or isolated work arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety planning for travel and lone attendance at events. • Check-in arrangements when working remotely or in isolation.
Poor workplace relationships, conflict, reputational harm or media scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful communication standards and conflict management processes. • Clear media and communications protocols.

5 Psychosocial Risk Management

The Councillors' primary obligation is to identify psychosocial and psychological safety risks that are experienced by, or may reasonably be experienced by, the Chief Executive Officer in the course of their role. This includes proactively considering both existing and emerging risks arising from governance activities, interactions, decisions and workplace arrangements.

Councillors are responsible for identifying and assessing these risks, implementing and mitigating appropriate control measures where reasonably practicable, and regularly

reviewing those controls to ensure they remain effective. This process is to be undertaken in accordance with the framework outlined in the following section, which adopts a structured four stage approach to psychosocial risk management.

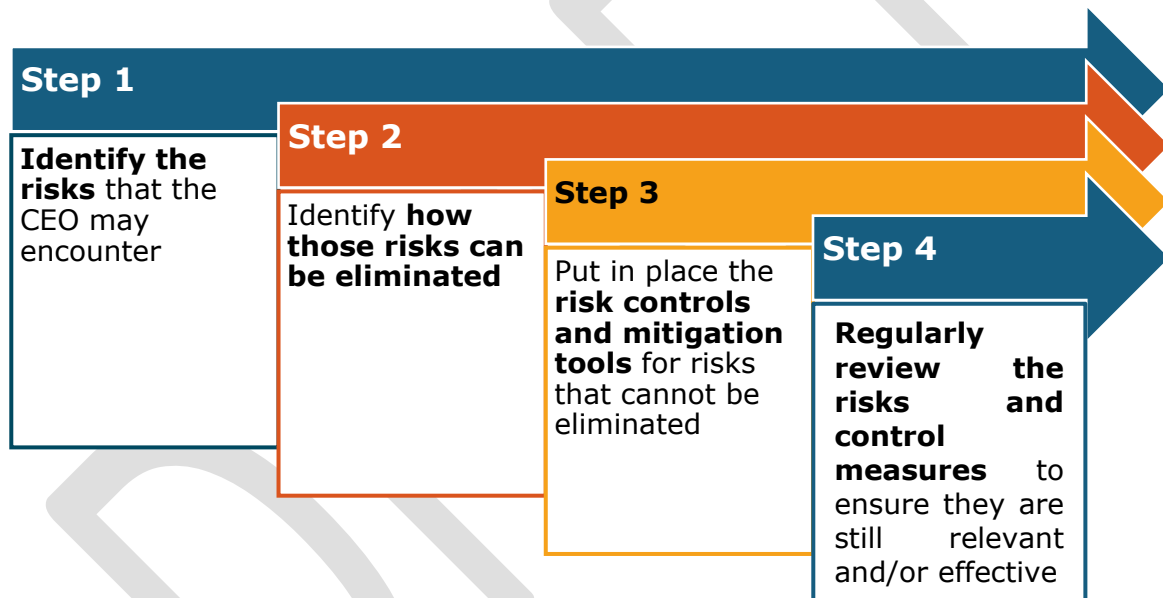
5.1 4-Stage Process for Identifying and Managing CEO Psychosocial Risks

The Council adopts a structured four stage process to identify, assess, manage and review psychosocial risks affecting the Chief Executive Officer. This process is cyclical and supports continuous improvement in psychological health and safety.

In accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025*, the Council will ensure that psychosocial risks affecting the Chief Executive Officer are documented through the completion and maintenance of a psychosocial hazard prevention plan.

The prevention plan will record the identification of psychosocial hazards, assessment of associated risks, implementation of control measures, and the review and revision of those controls. The prevention plan supports the application of the four stage psychosocial risk management process outlined in this Policy and provides evidence of compliance with legislative requirements.

Figure 1: 4-Stage Process for Identifying and Managing CEO Psychosocial Risks



The outcomes of each stage of this process will be documented in a psychosocial hazard prevention plan, developed and maintained in accordance with WorkSafe Victoria guidance.

5.1.1 Step 1: Identify Psychosocial Risks

Councillors will identify psychosocial and psychological safety risks that are experienced by, or may reasonably be experienced by, the Chief Executive Officer in the course of their role. This includes considering risks arising from governance activities, interactions, decision-making processes, workload demands, workplace relationships, public engagement, and organisational change. Risk identification will consider both existing and emerging psychosocial hazards.

5.1.2 Step 2: Identify Opportunities to Eliminate Risks

Where psychosocial risks are identified, Councillors will consider whether those risks can be eliminated so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes examining governance structures, role design, decision-making processes, behaviours, and systems of work to determine whether changes can be made to remove the source of the risk altogether.

5.1.3 Step 3: Implement Risk Controls and Mitigation Measures

Where identified psychosocial risks cannot be eliminated, Councillors will implement appropriate control measures to minimise the likelihood and potential impact of harm. Control measures will prioritise higher order controls that address work design, governance systems, behaviours and environmental factors. Training or individual level supports will be used to supplement, but not replace, higher order controls where reasonably practicable.

5.1.4 Step 4: Review Risks and Control Measures

Psychosocial risks and associated control measures will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant, effective and appropriate. Reviews may be triggered by changes in circumstances, identified issues, wellbeing check-ins, or as part of routine governance and performance processes. Where controls are found to be ineffective or no longer suitable, they will be adjusted or replaced as necessary.

The review of identified psychosocial risks and associated control measures will be undertaken periodically as part of the Chief Executive Officer's mid-year and annual performance review processes, as outlined in section 6. This review will support ongoing monitoring of risk controls, ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness, and enable timely adjustments in response to changing circumstances or emerging risks.

6 Identification, Monitoring and Review of Psychological Risks Through the CEO Review Process

This section of the Policy gives effect to the CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy and is to be applied and implemented in conjunction with that Policy. The processes outlined in this section form part of the formal governance and performance oversight framework for the Chief Executive Officer.

The review and related processes are to be undertaken by the Mayor and Councillors, with support from the Governance Support Officer, in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities. The Independent Advisor of the CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee has a specific role in ensuring the Chief Executive Officer position description remains current, accurate and reflective of the role's responsibilities.

In conjunction with the mid-year and annual performance review processes, the Independent Advisor will facilitate a review of the Chief Executive Officer position description to ensure it remains current, accurate and reflective of the role's responsibilities and expectations. As part of this review, the Independent Advisor may encourage discussion about potential and current psychosocial hazards relevant to the role, including hazards arising from role design, governance expectations, workload and interactions.

The following activities are to be undertaken in conjunction with section 5.1 (4 Stage Process for Identifying and Managing CEO Psychosocial Risks):

- **Step 1 – Identify psychosocial risks:** the survey and Committee discussion.
- **Step 2 – Identify opportunities to eliminate risks:** consideration by the Committee and workshop of elimination options, so far as reasonably practicable.
- **Step 3 – Implement risk controls and mitigation measures:** the agreed prevention plans and controls.
- **Step 4 – Review risks and control measures:** ongoing monitoring and review after each performance appraisal, with updates made as required.

6.1 CEO Psychological Hazards Survey

To support the ongoing identification, assessment, monitoring and review of psychosocial hazards and risks affecting the Chief Executive Officer, a CEO Psychological Hazards Survey will be used as part of the Council's annual and half-yearly Chief Executive Officer performance review cycle.

6.2 Timing and Circulation

At least one month prior to the annual and half-yearly Chief Executive Officer performance review, the Governance Support Officer, in conjunction with the Mayor, will circulate the CEO Psychological Hazards Survey to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer will complete the survey and return it to the Governance Support Officer for inclusion in the confidential materials prepared for the CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee.

6.3 Committee Agenda Item: Emerging Risks

At the CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee meeting convened to discuss the Chief Executive Officer's performance review, psychosocial risk management will be included as a standing item on the agenda. This agenda item will provide an opportunity for Councillors to identify any psychosocial hazards and risks that may be emerging or could reasonably be expected to emerge, and to confirm any matters for follow-up in the workshop, including consideration of the CEO Psychological Hazards Survey results.

6.4 Workshop: Prevention Planning

Following the Committee meeting, a workshop will be held with Councillors and Governance Support Officers to assess and discuss the CEO Psychological Hazards Survey results, consider any additional psychosocial hazards and risks identified by Councillors, and develop or update psychosocial hazard prevention plans (including agreed controls, responsibilities and timeframes).

6.5 Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Identified psychosocial hazards, risks and control measures will be monitored and reviewed at and after each subsequent performance appraisal, including mid-year and annual reviews. Prevention plans will be developed and modified as required to reflect changes in circumstances, emerging risks, or the effectiveness of existing controls.

6.6 Records and Confidentiality

Records associated with the survey outcomes, workshop discussions and any prevention plans will be maintained in accordance with section 8 (Confidentiality and Privacy) and relevant recordkeeping requirements.

7 Wellbeing Check Ins

The Mayor is responsible for conducting regular wellbeing check-ins with the Chief Executive Officer to support open communication and the early identification of any emerging psychosocial or wellbeing concerns. These check-ins are to occur at an agreed frequency (for example, weekly or fortnightly) and form part of the Council's broader approach to supporting psychological health and safety.

The Mayor must ensure that appropriate records of wellbeing check-ins are maintained for governance and reporting purposes, having regard to confidentiality and the sensitive nature of wellbeing matters.

8 Confidentiality and Privacy

It is acknowledged that, as there is only one Chief Executive Officer, de-identification of psychosocial or psychological health information is not possible. Accordingly, Councillors and the Governance Support Officer must exercise strict confidentiality in relation to any psychosocial or psychological hazards experienced by, or reasonably expected to be experienced by, the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer has the right to maintain their personal privacy and to determine the extent of any information they choose to disclose. Care must be taken to ensure that psychosocial hazards or wellbeing matters are not raised excessively or informally outside established governance processes, as this may compromise confidentiality, accuracy of records, and the integrity of monitoring arrangements.

To enable appropriate oversight while maintaining confidentiality, any queries or concerns about the Chief Executive Officer’s psychosocial health should be raised with the Mayor. The Mayor may then raise the matter during the CEO and Councillors only portion of Council Forums, to ensure the discussion is structured, respectful and appropriately recorded.

This process is intended to safeguard the Chief Executive Officer’s dignity and privacy, promote trust and open communication, and ensure that psychosocial risk management is conducted in a manner that does not cause discomfort, conflict, or unintended harm.

9 References

- [Occupational Health and Safety \(Psychological Health\) Regulations 2025 | legislation.vic.gov.au](https://legislation.vic.gov.au)
- [WorkSafe Victoria – Prevention plans for psychosocial hazards](#) (as updated from time to time)
- Model Councillor Code of Conduct
- CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

10 Definitions

Term	Description
Higher-Order Controls	Controls that address psychosocial hazards at their source by changing work design, systems of work, governance arrangements, management practices or the work environment, rather than relying solely on individual behaviour or resilience. Higher order controls aim to eliminate or minimise risks so far as is reasonably practicable and are prioritised over lower order controls such as training, policies or individual support measures.
Psychosocial Hazard	Factors in work design, systems of work, management of work, the carrying out of work, or personal/work-related interactions that may cause a negative psychological response and create a risk to health and safety.
Psychological Health	A person’s emotional and mental wellbeing, including the absence of work-related psychological injury.
Psychosocial Risk	The likelihood that exposure to a psychosocial hazard will cause harm and the severity of that harm.
Reasonably Practicable	What was reasonably practicable to ensure health and safety, having regard to the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring, the degree of harm that could result, what was known (or ought reasonably to have been known) about the hazard or risk and ways of eliminating or reducing it, the availability and suitability of controls, and the cost of those controls after assessing the level of risk.

11 Consistency with Governance Principles Local Government Act 2020

Governance Principle	Section of policy where covered
a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;	This Policy as a whole.
b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;	This Policy as a whole indirectly supports this principle.
c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;	This Policy as a whole indirectly supports this principle.
d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;	Not applicable.
e) innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;	This Policy as a whole gives effect to continuous improvement.
f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;	Not applicable.
g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;	This Policy supports the ongoing financial viability of the Council by ensuring that psychosocial risk controls are implemented on a 'reasonably practicable' basis.
h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;	Not applicable.
i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.	This Policy as a whole.

In giving effect to the overarching governance principles, a Council must take into account the following supporting principles—

Community Engagement Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope. Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement. Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement. Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.
Comment:	Not applicable.
Public Transparency Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act. Council information must be publicly available unless— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest. Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community. Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.
Comment:	This Policy supports transparent Council governance by clearly defining Councillor responsibilities, decision-making processes, and record-keeping requirements in relation to psychosocial risk management for the Chief Executive Officer. Transparency is balanced with the need to protect confidential and sensitive information, recognising that psychosocial and psychological health matters relating to the Chief Executive Officer cannot be de-identified and must be managed in accordance with privacy and confidentiality obligations.
Strategic Planning Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted. Strategic planning must address the Community Vision. Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation. Strategic planning must identify and address the risks to effective implementation. Strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances.
Comment:	While this Policy is not a strategic planning document, it gives effect to relevant Strategic Planning Principles by adopting a structured and integrated approach to identifying, managing, monitoring and reviewing psychosocial risks. The Policy embeds ongoing review and continuous improvement through a cyclical risk management

	framework and alignment with existing governance processes, including the Chief Executive Officer performance review cycle.
Financial Management Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions must be managed in accordance with a Council's financial policies and strategic plans. Financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances. Financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community. Accounts and records that explain the financial operations and financial position of the Council must be kept.
Comment:	This Policy does not regulate Council finances, financial transactions, or financial planning. However, it supports sound governance by requiring that psychosocial risk controls be implemented on a "reasonably practicable" basis, which includes consideration of cost relative to risk, and by requiring appropriate records to be maintained to evidence due diligence.
Service Performance Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community. Services should be accessible to the members of the municipal community for whom the services are intended. Quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community. A Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring. Service delivery must include a fair and effective process for considering and responding to complaints about service provision.
Comment:	This Policy does not govern the delivery of services to the municipal community. Its focus is on councillor conduct, employer obligations, and psychosocial risk management in relation to the Chief Executive Officer role. While the Policy promotes continuous improvement through regular review of risk controls, it does not establish service standards or service delivery mechanisms.

12 Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains current, effective and consistent with legislative requirements, contemporary best practice, and the Council's governance framework. The Policy may also be reviewed earlier where there are changes to relevant legislation, guidance issued by WorkSafe Victoria, or where operational or governance circumstances indicate the need for review.

From time to time, circumstances may require minor administrative changes to be made to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively and need not be considered and adopted by Council.

Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, or the legal responsibilities of any member of the community, it must be considered and adopted by Council, or by the Chief Executive Officer in reliance on delegated authority.

13 Legislative Context

This Policy is informed by and gives effect to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* and the *Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025*, which require employers to provide and maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, including psychological health.

The Policy is also informed by WorkSafe Victoria guidance on psychosocial hazard identification, prevention planning and risk control.

In addition, the Policy operates within the governance framework established by the *Local Government Act 2020*, the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*, and the Model Councillor Code of Conduct, which set expectations for Councillor conduct, ethical leadership and governance accountability.

This Policy does not replace or limit statutory obligations, and where any inconsistency arises, the relevant legislation prevails.

Council Approved Policy

Adopted:	Council Meeting [DATE]	Item [NUMBER] Minute Page [NUMBER]
Reviewed:		

DRAFT