

CONSULTATION DRAFT ONLY – NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY

Occupational Violence and Aggression Prevention Strategy 2021 – 2023



DRAFT for consultation



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Message from the Director-General OR Minister of Education

[To be drafted by SCE and inserted following consultation...]

Grace Grace (TBC)

Minister for Education
Minister for Industrial Relations and
Minister for Racing

Tony Cook (TBC)

Director-General
Department of Education

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The Strategy

Our commitment

The Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA) Strategy supports both the Queensland Government's long-term commitment to deliver world-class frontline services in education (Queensland Government, 2020) and the department's strategic priority "*creating safe and inclusive workplaces and building Queensland communities*" (Department of Education, 2020).

The Strategy aims to:

- actively promote community-wide understanding of the department's behaviour expectations through strong targeted communication and promotion campaigns;
- build a culture that eradicates anti-social and high risk behaviour (verbal and physical abuse and violence) within departmental workplaces;
- provide immediate support and guidance for staff affected by OVA through a range of proactive wellbeing and support programs; and create safe and healthy workplaces and communities through a range of initiatives that focus on reducing the risk of OVA within the workplace.

The community

The department acknowledges that OVA can have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of teachers and staff working in Queensland state schools. Unfortunately, the prevalence of OVA in department workplaces is increasing. Worker's compensation claims where the mechanism of injury has been coded by WorkCover Queensland as either "*assaulted by person*" or "*exposure to occupational violence*" have increased from 304 claims lodged in FY17 to 478 claims lodged in FY20. Without a dedicated, focused Strategy this rising trend could continue.

The department recognises that equal emphasis needs to be placed on both the physical and psychological impacts of OVA. Research shows that repeated acts of psychological aggression can have a very serious impact on victims. Aggressive behaviours that on a 'one-off' basis may appear to be relatively minor can have a significant cumulative effect. (Chappell & Di Martino, 2006) OVA may leave workers feeling emotionally and mentally drained, requiring psychological support and time off work to seek respite from the abusive behaviour.

The annual *Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2019* (Riley, See, Marsh, & Dicke, 2020) tracks and highlights growing trends for our school leaders across a wide range of psychosocial indices. The survey also looks at the exposure of our school leaders to offensive behaviour.

The 2019 survey results indicated:

- over 84% of school leaders reported being subjected to an offensive behaviour over the last year;
51% of school leaders reported having received threats of violence; and over 42% of school leaders have been exposed to physical violence.

Who is the Strategy for?

The Strategy is for all staff – for staff working within Queensland state schools and for staff working in regional and corporate offices.

How did we get here?

Steps taken

In 2018, the department released the *Occupational Violence Prevention Procedure*. The procedure provides the minimum standard for the prevention and management of OVA risks.

Following the introduction of the procedure, the department undertook extensive consultation across three phases as part of the Safe and Respectful School Community Roundtables. The output from this process was the draft Strategy underpinned by the OVA Action Plan.



Three pillars

The department seeks to achieve its goal to prevent OVA through the implementation of actions which have been aligned under three (3) core Pillars:



People: The people pillar ensures that staff most at risk have the skills required to respond to OVA and staff exposed to OVA are supported by leadership.



Public: The public pillar ensures that the department addresses OVA from both a school community and broader societal perspective in order to bring about sustainable behaviour change.



Systems & Processes: The systems and processes pillar ensures that the department has in place effective procedures to prevent, respond to and follow-up incidents of OVA.

Actions are supported by existing departmental strategies

Occupational Violence and Aggression Prevention

Strategy outcomes

 <p>Awareness raising</p>	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A systems approach which ensures that ALL staff know how and what information to access to be safe • Concurrent legislative obligations are met • Community-wide understanding of what behaviour is not acceptable in department workplaces • Maximisation/utilisation of existing support resources
 <p>Capability development</p>	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and implementation of training solutions which are tailored to meet the requirements of each employee • Improved capability and confidence of leaders to prevent, protect and mitigate OVA incidents
 <p>Resources</p>	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline existing departmental processes and systems • Ensure all existing preventative and early intervention procedures, processes and systems take into account OVA risks • Improve staff experience when using existing departmental processes and systems • High degree of data integrity
 <p>Culture</p>	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff exposed to OVA are supported • Strong and consistent leadership • Removal of stigma associated with exposure to, and reporting of, OVA
 <p>Integration and alignment</p>	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All department workplaces are safe and well maintained
 <p>Partnerships</p>	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice approach to the prevention of OVA in all Queensland state schools and department workplaces

Action Plan 2021 and beyond

Awareness raising

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
	<p>All employees understand existing health and safety systems, processes and procedures including incident reporting requirements</p> <p>Staff are confident in meeting their concurrent obligations under <i>Work Health and Safety Act (Qld, 2011)</i>, <i>Human Rights Act (Qld, 2019)</i> and <i>Education (General Provisions) Act (Qld, 2006)</i></p>	<p>Review <i>Mandatory All Staff Training (MAST)</i> and expand section on OVA</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
	<p>All staff aware of existing support services</p>	<p>Promote awareness of existing wellbeing and support services and programs available to staff</p>	<p>✓</p>	
	<p>Raise staff awareness of on-line abuse including prevention and reporting</p>	<p>Provide resources for staff on how to prevent and report on-line abuse and cyber-bullying</p>	<p>✓</p>	
	<p>All school community members understand the impact of OVA</p>	<p>Implement an external communication and engagement campaign encouraging acceptable behaviours in schools</p>	<p>✓</p>	
	<p>All school community members understand the department's behaviour expectations</p>	<p>Introduce a new <i>Parent and Community Code of Conduct</i> which sets out expectations of how parents/carers and other visitors to state schools should conduct themselves on school premises and at school events</p>	<p>✓</p>	
	<p>All school community members know how to raise a concern or complaint</p>	<p>Develop a communication strategy for schools to raise awareness about how to effectively manage a complaint</p>	<p>✓</p>	

Capability development

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
  	All employees have the skills required to recognise and respond to hostile workplace behaviours and situations.	Implement employee group specific training requirements focussed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> de-escalating hostile situations; and/or understanding and responding to specific behaviours/conditions 	✓	
  	All leaders are confident and capable in their ability to <i>Prevent, Protect, Mitigate</i> OVA	Update Management Foundations training		✓
		School leaders to complete Psychological First Aid training		✓

Resources

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
  	Strengthen preventative and early intervention procedures, processes and systems to ensure OVA risks are considered	Implement mandatory OVA <i>Incident Support and Response</i> model	✓	
		Develop and introduce a new risk assessment process focussed on the identification and management of OVA risks	✓	
  	Improve data integrity	Enhance current data collection and reporting to include OVA incidents	✓	

Culture

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
  	All staff receive immediate and ongoing support and guidance following exposure to OVA	Develop and pilot <i>Incident Support and Response Guide</i> for managers to assist with delivering administration, HR best practice and wellbeing	✓	

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
		support following an OVA incident		
		Incorporate OVA incident review into HSW Committees		✓
	Eliminate stigma associated with exposure to, and reporting of, OVA	Implement departmental OVA Strategy		✓
	All leaders aware and accountable	Incorporate OVA question into School Opinion Survey	✓	

Integration and alignment

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
	Maintain and deliver facilities and infrastructure which supports the safety and security of staff	Consideration of OVA risks in new school planning	✓	
		Develop and implement personal safety / security awareness training for high risk locations		✓

Partnerships

Pillar alignment	Key objective	Action/s	2021-22	2022-23
	Queensland government agencies working together in partnership to ensure a 'best-practice' approach	Establish an inter-agency taskforce	✓	
	Stay informed about jurisdictional best practice initiatives	Establish a community of practice with interstate education departments	✓	

Related existing policies and procedures

Code of Conduct for Queensland Public Service

Based on the four ethical principles and values of the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 (Qld) (Ethics Act), the [Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service](#) sets out the standards of conduct expected of a public sector employee.

Customer complaints management procedure and policy

[The procedure](#) outlines the responsibility and processes for the consistent management of customer complaints across the department. The procedure applies to schools and education centres, regions and divisions.

Hostile people on school premises, wilful disturbance and trespass procedure

[The procedure](#) outlines the options available under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) (EGPA)*, to assist principals and school staff in preventing and managing unsafe situations on the premises of state educational institutions. The department is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment for staff, volunteers, students, parents and visitors at state education institutions.

Occupational violence prevention procedure

[The procedure](#) provides the minimum standard for the prevention and management of OVA risks across the department with the intent of protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of staff who have the potential to experience OVA.

Preventing workplace bullying, sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination policy

[The policy](#) encourages the establishment and maintenance of a respectful workplace culture across the department. It outlines the expected behaviours of employees regarding the treatment of any other people in the course of performing their duties in any work location.

Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing current procedures

These [procedures](#) provide guidance to implement practices which provide safe, supportive and healthy working and learning environments for department staff and other persons involved in departmental activities.

Supporting students' wellbeing and mental health

Schools play a significant role in supporting the wellbeing and mental health of their students. The department's comprehensive approach is outlined in the [Student learning and wellbeing framework](#). Supporting the framework, the [Supporting students mental health and wellbeing procedure](#) outlines the roles and responsibilities of school staff in promoting wellbeing and mental health, intervening early, and providing specialised intervention and case management for students with mental health concerns.

Related existing programs

Employee assistance program

Staff and immediate family members can access free, confidential, telephone counselling services for work or non-work related issues by contacting the department's external [Employee Assistance Provider, LifeWorks](#).

Principal health and wellbeing strategy

[The Principal health and wellbeing strategy](#) delivers targeted initiatives that focus on assisting principals with the practicalities and complexities associated with leading and managing a school and the potential impact on health and wellbeing.

Related Queensland legislation

Queensland's work health and safety laws

The [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#) requires departmental workplaces (including schools) to immediately advise Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) of notifiable health and safety incidents.

Human Rights Act 2019

The [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#) (the HR Act) commenced in its entirety on 1 January 2020. The HR Act places the human rights of individuals at the forefront of government and public sector decision making and service delivery, ensuring that all Queenslanders, especially the most vulnerable, have their human rights respected, protected and promoted. The HR Act applies to all public service employees. Employees must consider human rights when you make a decision or take action that affects individuals in Queensland. This includes when you deal directly with a person, such as students, parents and caregivers, or when you recommend or make a decision that will indirectly affect people. It is each employee's responsibility to understand when decisions or actions may impact human rights and how to act and make decisions that are compatible with human rights.

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