



Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to establish clear and consistent procedures for addressing risks to health and safety in the workplace associated with the inappropriate use of alcohol and/or other drugs.

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
Work Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (NSW)
Road Transport Act 2013
Road Transport (General) Regulation 2021

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Australian Standards:
AS3547:2019 – Breath alcohol testing devices for personal use.
AS4760:2019 – Procedures for specimen collection and the detection and quantitation of drugs in oral fluid.

POLICY STATEMENT

Goulburn Mulwaree Council (Council) recognises that the inappropriate use of alcohol and/or other drugs is a significant problem that can affect a worker's performance and jeopardise their health, safety and welfare as well as that of their co-workers and other people in the workplace.

1. Safety in the Workplace

Employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their workers and other people in the workplace (s19, *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*). Workers have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, as well as for the health and safety of other people in the workplace and to co-operate with their employer in providing a safe working environment (s28, *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*).

2. Fitness for Work

Workers are obliged to present themselves for work in a fit state so that in carrying out their work activities they do not expose themselves, their co-workers or other people in the workplace to unnecessary risks to health and safety.

The welfare of the individual and the health and safety of other people in the workplace needs to be considered.

There are penalties, under legislation for employers and the Award for workers who fail to take their occupational health and safety responsibilities seriously.

3. Establishing a Supportive Culture

Any alcohol and other drugs procedures should promote a supportive culture in which workers are able to seek the assistance of their employer in a non-threatening environment.

Council will foster a supportive culture that encourages employees to accept individual responsibility for workplace health and safety and participation in disclosing to management the identity of employees who may be regarded as a risk to others. Such an approach is supported by WHS legislation and industry parties.

A supportive culture will encourage a co-operative approach between management and workers and build on the shared interest in workplace health and safety.

A supportive culture may be achieved by:

- recognising that the inappropriate use of alcohol and/or other drugs can be due to illness (e.g. dependency) or symptomatic of an illness (e.g. depression); and
- providing non-threatening assistance to workers who recognise that they have alcohol and/or other drug related problems (e.g. employers should ensure that workers are informed of the availability of an employee assistance program); and
- ensuring that clear and consistent processes are in place for addressing risks to health and safety in the workplace; and
- respecting the privacy of workers by ensuring that appropriate systems are in place to maintain confidentiality.

4. General Conduct Obligations

Workers are obliged to present themselves for work in a fit state so that when carrying out their work activities they do not expose themselves, their co-workers or other people in the workplace to unnecessary risks to health and safety.

Council's Code of Conduct (the "Code") establishes the minimum requirements of conduct for Council officials in carrying out their functions (a Council official is defined to include Councillors, members of staff, administrators, conduct reviewers and delegates of Council).

It is a requirement of the Code that Council officials must not conduct themselves, when carrying out their functions, in a manner that is likely to bring the Council or holders of civic office into disrepute (clause S3.1 of the Code). Council officials are expected to maintain high standards of professional conduct and service to the community and must act honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence when carrying out their functions.

By way of example, a worker may be in breach of their general conduct obligations under the Code if they:

- attend for work whilst under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs; or
- conduct themselves in an inappropriate and/or unprofessional manner whilst at work or at a work-related function (which may be due to the effects of inappropriate alcohol and/or other drugs use).

5. Disciplinary Procedures

Council generally will be supportive and rehabilitative but there will be occasions when disciplinary action is appropriate.

Procedures for managing workplace risks associated with the use of alcohol and/or other drugs should balance:

1. the employer's obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers and other people in the workplace, and

2. promoting a supportive culture in which workers feel able to seek the assistance of their employer in a non-threatening environment.

The focus of any workplace alcohol and/or other drugs procedures should initially be on education and correcting inappropriate worker behaviour. Although disciplinary action may be necessary, it should be viewed as a measure of last resort that is reserved for serious breaches of the Code or where a worker has repeatedly failed to respond to warnings about their work performance or work conduct. Where appropriate, disciplinary action should be complimented by offers of support to the worker through council's employee assistance program or other external agencies such as specialist units at public hospitals.

6. Alcohol and Other Drugs Testing

Workplace alcohol and other drugs testing (D&A testing) is a complex issue. Things to consider include:

- **When to test** – Common examples of when D&A testing is conducted by employers include, upon reasonable suspicion that a person may be impaired (reasonable suspicion testing), following a workplace health and safety incident (post incident testing), randomly (random testing) and voluntary testing.
- **Types of tests** – There is a variety of different D&A testing methods available. Some of the more common forms of D&A testing include breath testing, blood testing, saliva testing, urine testing, sweat testing and hair testing. Some testing procedures are more likely to identify the likelihood of actual impairment than others and some will identify drug use almost immediately after use rather than only being able to detect use over an hour or more following the use of the drug/s. The LGNSW, USU, LGEA and DEPA support the use of breath analysis for alcohol testing and saliva for other drugs. Saliva testing can provide a positive result immediately after use and whose range of detectability is such that it is more likely to indicate potential and or actual impairment when compared to other testing procedures which can provide a positive result to substances days, weeks or months after last use/exposure, at which time the worker may not be impaired at work.

The primary objective of an Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy is to ensure WHS obligations are met and to educate workers on the effects of the misuse of alcohol and/or other drugs within the workplace. The costs of different types of testing, whilst relevant, should not be the sole factor in weighing up how to meet such WHS obligations.

- **Worker privacy** – Some D&A testing methods may be considered more intrusive than others. Furthermore, inappropriate alcohol and/or other drugs use may have been in response to an underlying illness or personal concern (e.g. depression, family pressures, etc.). It is imperative that a worker's privacy be respected and that the results of D&A testing be kept confidential.
- **Who to test** – Employers should consider how best to allocate and use their limited resources in adopting and implementing Alcohol and other Drug Testing Procedures based upon WH&S risk assessment/s and organisational risks, in relation to any random testing. The industry parties recommend that where random testing is undertaken, all workers are eligible to be tested.
- **The meaning of a non-negative test result** – A non-negative test result can have different meanings. For example, blood and saliva testing will generally detect the presence of a substance that was consumed within a matter of hours, whereas hair testing can detect the presence of a substance that was consumed months earlier. A non-negative test result may not indicate that a worker is unfit for work.

When developing procedures for managing workplace risks associated with the use of alcohol and/or other drugs, LGNSW, USU, LGEA and DEPA recommend that employers:

- where practicable, only use D&A testing methods that detect 'recent use' as this is likely to be more reliable in detecting whether a worker is unfit for work, and
- avoid using D&A testing methods that unreasonably intrude upon the private/personal affairs of workers.

Industrial courts/tribunals have found that urine testing can be unnecessarily invasive and that a non-negative test result is less likely to indicate impairment than other forms of testing.

The USU, LGEA, DEPA and LGNSW, as a general rule, do not support the use of urine testing at Council workplaces unless it is to confirm a test result (i.e. a confirmatory test) or unless the employee requests that a urine test be undertaken.

7. Definitions

LGA - Local Govt. Association of NSW

USU- Utilities Services Union

DEPA - Development and Environmental Professionals' Association

Version	Council Meeting Date	Resolution	Adoption Date	Effective From
1	3 March 2015	15/74	31 March 2015	1 July 2015
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DIRECTORATE: Executive Services

BUSINESS UNIT: Human Resources