



CITY OF PALMERSTON ELECTED MEMBERS PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY AND WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

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CEO MESSAGE

I recognise that psychosocial safety for Elected Members is essential to protecting their mental health and wellbeing. Elected Members should feel safe and supported when representing Council in official business.

This Framework has been developed as a reference to help support Elected Members in navigating the unique responsibilities and challenges that come with serving on Council.

I hope this Framework helps Council continue to provide strong representation for the community, in a psychologically safe working environment.

PURPOSE

The City of Palmerston Elected Members Psychosocial Safety and Wellbeing Framework (the Framework) promotes a psychologically safe decision-making environment for Elected Members by providing clear guidance and parameters for undertaking Council duties.

Elected Members represent the community's best interests and advocate to provide public value through Council operations. Like other workers, committee members and board members, Elected Members have the right to feel safe in their place of work. The Framework establishes Council's commitment to supporting that right in line with work health and safety principles under the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*.

The Framework aims to:

1. Define the responsibilities and obligations of Elected Members, the Mayor and the CEO;
2. Provide the hazard identification and reporting process;
3. Promote a supportive working environment; and
4. Supports the duty of care of Elected Members through relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

Together, these measures support a robust and confident Elected Member group that works effectively and demonstrates alignment with the community's vision of "A Place for People".

OBLIGATIONS OF THE ORGANISATION

City of Palmerston is obligated to provide a safe and healthy physical work environment as a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU). This includes a duty of care to Council staff, Elected Members and other persons, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In relation to the psychosocial wellbeing of Elected Members, Council's role is focused on formal Council duties and the facilities, staff, systems and working environments it provides. At the direction of the CEO, staff may facilitate a physically safe work environment and develop supporting procedures, policies, workshops and training to support the psychosocial health and wellbeing of Elected Members while they are undertaking Council business. Outside this context, Elected Members, the Mayor and the CEO each retain responsibilities for managing psychosocial safety within their respective roles.

DEFINING REPRESENTATION: COUNCIL DUTIES VS PERSONAL PROMOTION

Scope of representation

It is important to distinguish between activities undertaken while formally representing Council and activities undertaken in a personal capacity, including self-promotion as an Elected Member. This distinction helps clarify when the Framework applies and where responsibility for managing psychosocial safety primarily sits.

When a community member nominates for Council, they acknowledge that the role attracts public attention and scrutiny. As self-nominated public figures, Elected Members are expected to take reasonable steps to manage their own mental health and wellbeing, particularly when engaging in activities outside formal Council duties.

Using the table

The table below provides examples of activities that are generally considered formal Council duties and those that are generally considered personal activities. It also indicates where support may apply and where Elected Members are responsible for managing their own psychosocial safety.

Representing Council (formal Council duties and within the Framework)	Representing self (self-promotion and outside the Framework)
Attending and engaging at a Council meeting	Attending any event not arranged or supported through Council
Attending a conference where costs have been covered by the organisation	Attending a conference, workshop or function not arranged through Council
Attending a Council event with expected duties, such as meet and greet, speech or award presentation responsibilities	Responding to a media request or speaking to media directly without official approval from the Mayor or CEO
Responding to an interview with media arranged through the organisation and approved by the Mayor or CEO	Responding to your own social media comments on your own channel
Seeking support or raising concerns about workload, wellbeing or psychosocial hazards arising from formal Council duties	Experiencing burnout from personal work, family or Council-related commitments where personal wellbeing strategies have not been applied

OBLIGATIONS OF ELECTED MEMBERS

Elected Members are required to acknowledge their responsibilities in relation to psychosocial behaviours and to act appropriately in accordance with the Code of Conduct Local Government (General) Regulations 2021, the *Local Government Act 2019* (NT), and the Code of Practice on Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work under section 274 of the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*.

The Code of Conduct as per the Local Government (General) Regulations 2021 addresses the following obligations expected of Elected Members:

1. Personal integrity.
2. Relationships with others.
3. Accountability.
4. Social media.
5. other obligations include
 - 5.1. A member must not be impaired by alcohol or drugs.
 - 5.2. A member must comply with all policies, procedures and resolutions of the local government.
6. Perceived misconduct.
7. Council or committee meetings.
8. Misuse of local government council resources.
9. Securing personal advantage or disadvantaging others.
10. Prohibition against involvement in administration.
11. Relationship with local government employees.
12. Compliance with sanction.

Elected Members are responsible for complying with the Code of Conduct and relevant legislation while undertaking Council-related business and activities. Council is expected to work together as an effective governing body and demonstrate a commitment to respectful, transparent and ethical decision-making.

PROACTIVELY MITIGATE PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Elected Members have a responsibility to remain alert to psychosocial hazards arising through their role, interactions and Council activities, and to take proactive steps to identify, manage and report those hazards as early as possible. Psychosocial hazards relevant to Elected Members may arise from the nature of the role, the way Council work is organised, the environments in which Elected Members perform their duties, and the behaviours they may experience from internal or external parties. Identifying these hazards early and taking reasonable steps to eliminate or minimise risks is an important part of fulfilling these responsibilities.

Management of the work

In the context of Elected Members, this may include:

- Pressure arising from the level of responsibility associated with being an Elected Member and the need to make decisions on complex, sensitive or contentious matters;
- Balancing Council responsibilities with personal commitments;
- High workload, long hours, after-hours meetings and ongoing community engagement expectations;
- Constant connectivity and perceived or actual expectations to respond quickly to messages, calls or social media activity; and
- Role ambiguity or unclear role boundaries.

The working environment

In the context of Elected Members, this may include:

- Working in public-facing settings such as Council meetings, community forums, events and online platforms where interactions may be unpredictable;
- Public scrutiny, criticism and reputational pressure associated with decisions and visibility in the community;
- Exposure to misinformation through media reporting or persistent negative commentary on social media; and
- Limited privacy or difficulty separating Council duties from personal life due to the visibility of the role.

Harmful behaviours experienced by an Elected Member

In the context of Elected Members, this may include:

- Aggression, harassment, intimidation or abuse from members of the public;
- Threats to personal safety, family, reputation or property, whether made in person, in writing or online;
- Conflict between Elected Members;
- Exposure to sensitive or distressing circumstances that can take place in the community; and
- Bullying, repeated unreasonable behaviour, or harmful online conduct such as trolling.

A proactive approach to identifying and managing psychosocial hazards can help prevent harm such as stress, anxiety and burnout.

In accordance with the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011 (NT) Part 3.1, psychosocial risks must be managed so that Elected Members can confidently participate in required Council activities. This includes eliminating risks where possible and applying mitigation measures when Council business is taking place.

CONTROLS

Current controls in place to support Elected Members with psychosocial safety include:

- Regular communication with other Elected Members and the CEO;
- Comprehensive induction and workshops following election, including clear expectations about the role of Elected Members;
- Provision of a range of user-friendly ways to make reports informally, formally, and confidentially;
- Encouraging Elected Members to escalate any concerning issues immediately;
- Encouraging Elected Members to implement their own “rules of engagement” on personal social media channels, while complying with the Code of Conduct and relevant City of Palmerston policies. For example, Elected Members are encouraged to disengage from community members who display harmful behaviour;
- Encouraging Elected Members to seek support and advice from their peers; and
- Access to the City of Palmerston Employee Assistance Program.

PROVIDE A SUPPORTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In addition to ensuring the working environment is free from hazards, the assurance of an environment where Elected Members feel supported and enabled to conduct Council business is also important. Supportive peer relationships and professional, respectful interactions can help minimise a range of psychosocial hazards.

This can be supported through:

- Training and refresher training in the Code of Conduct and expected behaviours of Elected Members;
- Psychosocial and Wellbeing training and refresher training;
- Community awareness initiatives that demonstrate a commitment to safe and respectful civic participation, such as Brekkie in the Park;
- Other supportive training that may assist Elected Members in their duties, such as social media, media and de-escalation training;
- Regular inspections or conversations about emerging psychosocial hazards in the working environment;
- Access to the Employee Assistance Program for Elected Members; and
- A comprehensive induction program to help Elected Members understand their role.

The CEO, Mayor and Elected Members are required to foster positive and respectful working relationships where inappropriate behaviours are not tolerated and are addressed.

Regular review of this document will help ensure the Framework remains comprehensive and effective in mitigating the impacts of psychosocial risks on Elected Members.

MEET LEGAL AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

The following legislative and regulatory requirements support the protection of Elected Members from psychosocial harm in addition to the Framework. Elected Members have an obligation to be aware of and comply with the following:

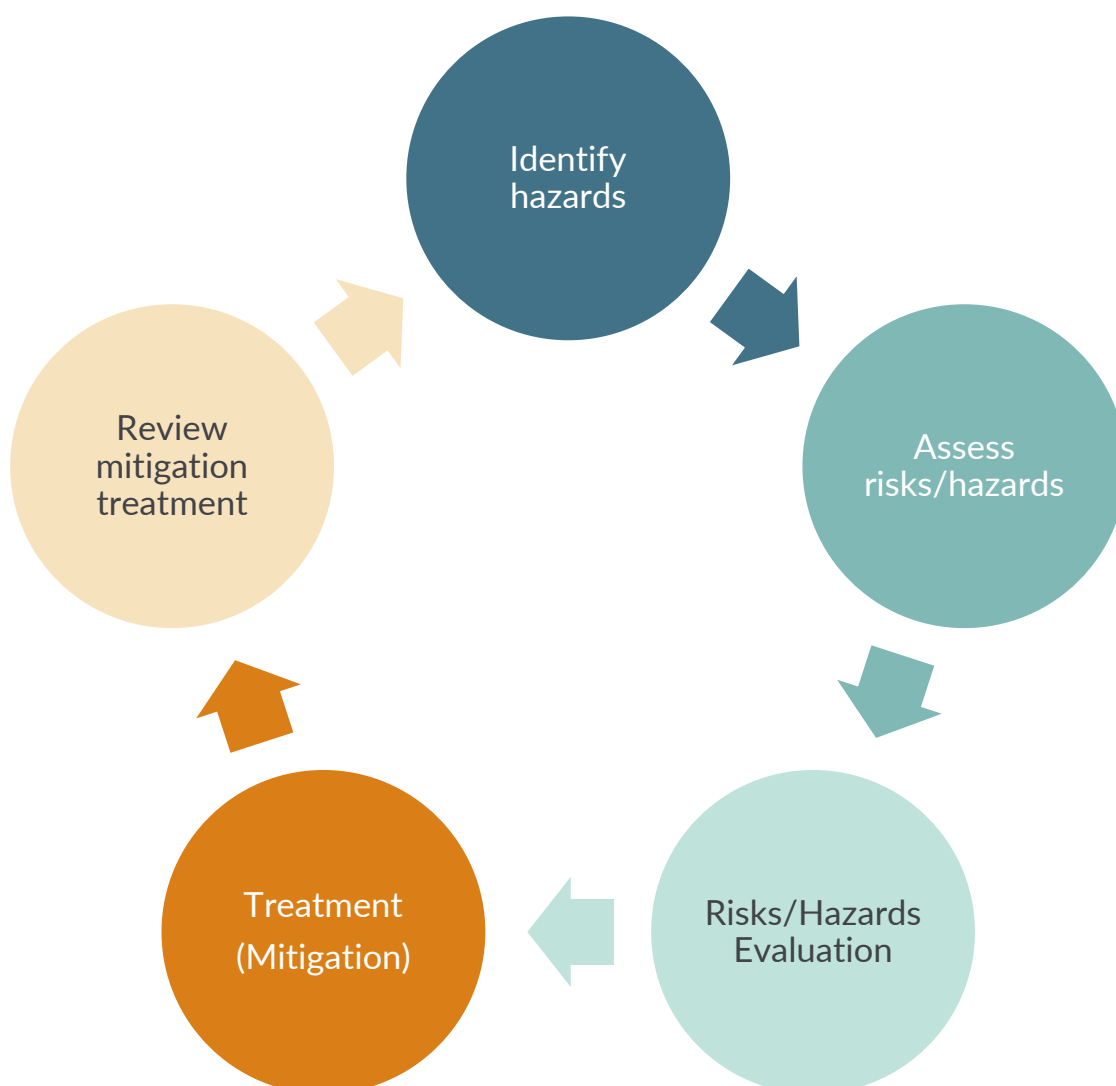
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
- Code of Practice on Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work
- Local Government Act 2019 (NT)
- Local Government (General) Regulations 2021
- Local Government (General Regulations 2021 Schedule 1A Code of Conduct
- Relevant City of Palmerston Policies
- Breach of Code of Conduct by Elected Member – Council Policy

REPORTING

If an Elected Member identifies a hazard or risk, or experiences an incident related to their own or another Elected Member's psychosocial safety and wellbeing and is unable to mitigate or eliminate the risk themselves, they may escalate the matter in writing to either the Mayor or the CEO.

Depending on the situation, immediate action may be required. The affected Elected Member remains responsible for seeking support for any mental health concerns that arise from their Council role. The Mayor and other Elected Members should provide support where possible to prevent further harm. Support options may include a leave of absence, reduced face-to-face contact, access to mental health services or relevant training. If the issue involves the Mayor, or the Mayor has a conflict of interest that could affect a positive resolution, the CEO may intervene.

If an Elected Member does not feel comfortable reporting directly to the Mayor or CEO, they may involve a third party. Any findings from an investigation will be taken seriously and, where possible, actions will be implemented to prevent further incidents.



REVIEW

Safe work systems and procedures are essential controls for managing risk and are the responsibility of all Elected Members.

Regular dialogue about psychosocial hazards and risks for Elected Members is an important part of maintaining a safe working environment.

This document will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet its purpose.

Everyone has a responsibility to consistently demonstrate positive workplace behaviours that are respectful and psychologically safe for those around them. In addition to addressing external factors where behaviours may fall short, Elected Members should also hold each other accountable.

The review process should continue throughout the life of the document. Required amendments should be made promptly, including amendments needed to reflect legislative or regulatory changes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- Ensures a comprehensive induction is provided to all current and new Elected Members;
- Ensures administrative support, policies and procedures are available to Elected Members;
- Ensures appropriate training is provided to Elected Members;
- Ensures the Framework is regularly reviewed;
- Acts as a reporting line for Elected Members if required;
- Provides confidentiality to Elected Members involved in sensitive incidents; and
- Provides support services such as counselling, when required.

Mayor

- Leads through role modelling positive and appropriate workplace behaviours;
- Encourages Elected Members to work together and support one another; and
- Supports a positive working relationship with the CEO.

All Elected Members

- Take responsibility for their own psychosocial safety and apply mitigation measures within their control;
- Follow the requirements of the Framework and any related legislative or regulatory requirements noted in this document;
- Promptly report psychosocial hazards to their peers, the Mayor or the CEO, as appropriate;
- Support a positive working relationship with Council and the CEO; and
- Monitor and address their own mental wellbeing and apply mitigation strategies such as breathwork, physical activity, meditation, walking or spending quality time with family and friends.

The Framework supports Elected Members to manage their psychosocial health and wellbeing. Elected Members have primary responsibility for maintaining a safe working environment for themselves and for reporting hazards promptly through the appropriate channels. The organisation's role is to support this through workshops, inductions, policies and procedures, as directed by the CEO.