

ALLIANZ AUSTRALIA INSURANCE LIMITED

Workplace Violence and Aggression Response Best Practice Hierarchy

'The Current Climate'

Allianz is committed to supporting safe, well and thriving workplaces that are informed and equipped to address the breadth of workplace and people risks. Allianz is committed to understanding trends, emerging challenges and the experience of Australian workers so we can lead research and innovation to benefit workplaces, leaders and employees alike. We have partnered with the La Trobe University School of Occupation Therapy to better understand the experiences of work-related violence and aggression (WVA) in frontline industries, capture the best practice evidence base for providing employees with support and psychological safety and translate this research into practical advice and resources to enhance the capability and tools available to Australian workplaces.

Frontline workers across a wide variety of Australian workplaces and industries are experiencing incidents of WVA through the course of their day-to-day work.

Experiences may include significant incidents such as physical or sexual assault. It may also include less overt, but equally impactful experiences such as verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, inappropriate and disrespectful comments, aggressive or dismissive gestures, physical actions, and deliberately obstructive and difficult service users and community members. These experiences are not limited to in-person interactions with WVA. It can be exhibited during phone calls and videoconferencing, over social media and through correspondence and email. The breadth of experiences that are recognised as causing distress and risk due to their violent, abusive or inappropriate nature continue to expand and as such the ability of workplaces to respond must also evolve and develop.





76%





“being assaulted by a person” or
“exposure to workplace violence”
grew by 76% from 2019 to 2023

Allianz’s national claims data demonstrates that psychological injuries resulting from “being assaulted by a person” or “exposure to workplace violence” grew by 76% from 2019 to 2023. Achieving visibility on the scope of all WVA incidents in workplaces is challenging, with many experiences going unreported as employees unfortunately consider them ‘part of the job’. Yet the impacts are clear including growing absenteeism and presenteeism, staffing crises across frontline industries and employees increasingly reporting experiences of burnout and fatigue as the impacts of being exposed to incidents accumulate over time. To assist in addressing these rapidly growing trends, Allianz in partnership with La Trobe University have developed a series of standardised and consistent response tools designed to support the health and wellbeing of employees in frontline industries where WVA is not always preventable.





Best-practice hierarchy for developing a post-incident WVA strategy

The table on the next page provides a hierarchy of best practice responses to WVA in frontline industries to assist in developing a WVA post-incident support strategy at an organisational level. Implementing the basic, better or best recommendations helps address the potential wellbeing impact on employees following significant incidents of WVA, or cumulative exposure to low level experiences. By implementing a dedicated WVA strategy, frontline industries help to de-stigmatise the experience of WVA, improve protective and help seeking/giving actions, and meet their work health and safety responsibilities.








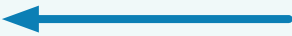
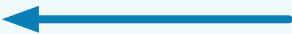
	 Basic	 Better (same as basic, plus)	 Best (same as better, plus)
System	WVA prevention and response policy in place incorporating considerations for the psychological impact of incidents.		Ongoing review and co-design of WVA prevention and response policy and supporting resources with employees.
	Ongoing WVA prevention and response activity focused on environmental intervention and employee training to reduce incidents.	Ongoing WVA prevention and response activity including measures to understand and improve the service user experience to reduce incidents.	Ongoing WVA prevention and response activity including staffing measures to create additional dedicated roles (including security) increase staffing numbers during high-risk periods and/or increase staff rotation through high-risk environments
	Regular within team knowledge sharing for WVA prevention and response strategies.	Regular interdepartmental knowledge sharing for WVA prevention and response strategies.	Regular interagency/industry knowledge sharing for WVA prevention and response strategies.
	Clearly communicate incident reporting processes and actions.	Dedicated roles/processes to analyse overall WVA trends, develop organisational intervention/support strategies and develop content for WVA discussions to be an ongoing agenda item for team meetings, including supportive review for any recent local incidents. Inclusion of anonymous incident reporting to increase reporting and data visibility.	Develop a process to routinely capture data and information regarding low level experiences of WVA (those that do not constitute a formal incident), analyse overall trends, develop organisational intervention/support strategies and develop content for WVA discussions to be an ongoing agenda item for team meetings. Implement experience reporting (distinct from incident reporting) to capture instances of low level WVA.
	Employee Assistance Program available.	Dedicated defusing hotline facilitated by the Employee Assistance Provider that provides immediate access to professional support specifically as a response to WVA.	Develop a network of local health professionals, including GP's and psychologists, where employees can access preferential appointments funded by the workplace to provide support for the impacts of WVA. Ensure that these providers have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of work completed by employees and the supports and adjustments available at the workplace to assist with stay at work or return to work planning.
	Within discipline monthly wellbeing peer support.	Interdisciplinary monthly wellbeing peer support.	Interdisciplinary fortnightly wellbeing peer support.




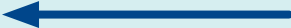

	 Basic	 Better (same as basic, plus)	 Best (same as better, plus)
Leaders and Peer Support 	Train all frontline leaders to provide effective response and support to all instances of WVA including understanding internal systems and processes, reporting, managing risks and providing support and defusing to impacted employees.	Establish a peer support program to complement the role of leaders in providing support for employees impacted by WVA. Ensure peer support network members are appropriately trained and their role is effectively communicated throughout the organisation.	Establish a dedicated WVA response team/role as an extension of the workplace WHS and/or People and Culture team who are responsible for managing, coordinating and innovating the approach to WVA and who can provide an additional level of support to impacted employees.
		Implement routine huddle meetings to assess, identify and communicate potential risks of WVA.	Implement weekly huddle meetings to assess, identify and communicate potential risks of WVA.
	Undertake regular awareness activity to ensure that leaders and/or peer support networks are informed about resources and supports that the workplace can make available to employees impacted by WVA.	Undertake regular awareness activity to ensure that leaders and peer support networks are informed about WVA resources, tools and supports that are available via external organisations (such as WorkSafe Victoria, icare, SafeWork).	Create and maintain WVA digital hub on the intranet or similar to provide leaders and peer support networks with current information and resources regarding WVA supports (internal and external), selfcare strategies and support tools.

	 Basic	 Better (same as basic, plus)	 Best (same as better, plus)
Individual 	Train all employees to identify the early indicators of WVA and respond safely and effectively including industry specific de-escalation and aggression minimisation techniques.	←	←
	Undertake regular awareness activity to ensure that all employees understand what internal support is available to them and how it can be accessed.	←	Create and maintain WVA digital hub on the intranet or similar to provide all employees with current information and resources regarding WVA supports (internal and external), selfcare strategies and peer support tools.

Best-practice hierarchy for providing post-incident support

The table below provides a hierarchy of best practice responses to WVA in frontline industries for leaders and others providing direct support to employees who have been impacted by WVA. Implementing the basic, better or best standards ensures that those providing support are proactively responding to WVA incidents with care, empathy and best practice. By implementing these recommendations, workplaces can strive for an effective response to WVA, create a psychologically safe work environment and support employee wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

 Basic	 Better (same as basic, plus)	 Best (same as better, plus)
Defusing session within 12 working hours following the incident, facilitated by a suitable manager.		Defusing session immediately following the incident, facilitated by a specially trained peer support network or manager.
Line manager to provide fortnightly, informal check-in to monitor the impact of and provide support for WVA, for an agreed period post-incident. Check-in to be ongoing on a monthly to bi-monthly basis for cumulative experiences.	A consistent manager/peer supporter to provide weekly, formal check-in to monitor the impact of and provide support for WVA, for a minimum of six weeks post-incident.	
Additional post-incident support provided in the form of written materials/information including 'Are you experiencing WVA?' resource.		Additional post-incident support provided by an employee peer support network or dedicated team who have specialised skills/training to responding to workplace WVA.
Provide support to the impacted employee to complete internal incident reporting and follow standard investigation and response procedures.	Specifically analyse overall WVA trends, develop organisational intervention/support strategies and include WVA discussion as an ongoing agenda item for team meetings, including supportive review for any recent local incidents.	Develop a process to routinely capture data and information regarding low level experiences of WVA (those that do not constitute a formal incident), analyse overall trends, develop organisational intervention/support strategies and include WVA discussion as an ongoing agenda item for team meetings.
As required, explore short-term adjustments to work duties to provide post-incident support and psychological safety. Provide ongoing discussion and re-assessment (informed by treating health practitioners as relevant) regarding the employees capacity to return to normal duties during weekly check-in.		Develop a suitable duties guide specific to adjustments, supports and graded activity that can be implemented to support employees who have been impacted by WVA.

 Basic	 Better (same as basic, plus)	 Best (same as better, plus)
<p>As required, provide support for the impacted employee to submit a Workers' Compensation Claim where they have been harmed by an incident of WVA.</p> <p>Proactively commence return to work or stay at work planning and support any medical needs.</p>		
<p>Connect impacted employee with professional support including the Employee Assistance Provider.</p>	<p>Provide impacted employee with access to an immediate defusing hotline facilitated by the Employee Assistance Provider specific to the experience of WVA.</p>	<p>Provide impacted employee with access to a network of local health professionals, including GP's and psychologists, where they can access preferential appointments funded by the workplace to provide support for the impacts of WVA.</p>
<p>Provide opportunities for employees at risk of being impacted by WVA to engage in routine within-team peer support and/or wellbeing sessions/activities (such as selfcare lunch and learns).</p>		<p>Provide opportunities for employees at risk of being impacted by WVA to engage in monthly whole of organisation community of practice, peer support and/or wellbeing sessions/activities (such as selfcare lunch and learns).</p>



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