



## **Employee Assistance Program**

### **Background**

1. Acknowledging that issues may affect an employee's performance at work, employees may access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for personal or work related issues in accordance with clause 60 of the Enterprise Agreement.
2. An employee's immediate family and/or household member may also access the EAP.
3. The EAP is an independent counselling service provided by an external service provider with a network of associated counsellors across Australia.
4. All counsellors are registered psychologists or social workers experienced in helping people. A counsellor is able to discuss an issue with a person sympathetically, constructively, impartially and, subject to certain exceptions, confidentially (refer to paragraph 14).
5. Employing Members and their employees can arrange for an EAP counsellor to attend their electorate office to support MOP(S) Act employees following natural disasters or traumatic incidents; or to provide information on dealing with traumatised or difficult constituents.

### **Access to EAP**

6. The EAP may be accessed for assistance with a wide range of work related and/or personal issues including, but not limited to:
  - a. conflict at work;
  - b. work performance issues;
  - c. personal and career direction;
  - d. stress and pressure;
  - e. anxiety and depression;
  - f. personal trauma and grief;
  - g. financial and legal problems;
  - h. alcohol, drug or gambling problems;
  - i. child and family concerns; and
  - j. marital and relationship problems
7. Employees may access up to three counselling sessions per issue (the first plus two follow-up sessions), for up to two issues in a 12 month period.

8. If the EAP service provider recommends additional EAP counselling, in addition to the three sessions at paragraph 7, the EAP service provider will seek the agreement from the Department. In seeking the agreement of the Department, the EAP service provider will respect the privacy of the employee.
9. The Department incurs costs for 'no show' appointments or where cancellation is not made at least 24 hours prior to the appointment. Where this occurs the unattended/late cancelled appointment will count as one session for the employee concerned.
10. It is up to the employee to make his or her own appointment to see a counsellor in a convenient location.
11. If an EAP counsellor is not readily available in a person's local area: The EAP may be accessed for assistance with a wide range of work related and/or personal issues including, but not limited to:
  - a. it may be possible to arrange a time when the person and a counsellor are available to discuss the situation over the telephone; or
  - b. the counsellor may be able to refer the person to an appropriate affiliated service provider in the person's local area.
12. Contact details for the current EAP service provider are available on the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services website or can be obtained from the Staff Help Desk.
13. If employees are unsure whether the EAP service provider can assist them, the employee may ring and outline his or her issue with a counsellor before making an appointment.

## **Confidentiality of EAP counselling services**

14. All EAP counselling services are confidential with the exceptions to this being:
  - a. with consent by the client;
  - b. where there is a risk to the safety of the client or others (as determined by the counsellor);
  - c. to comply with statutory duties (for example mandatory reporting); or
  - d. to comply with a court order or subpoena.
15. The EAP service provider supplies the Department with aggregate statistics and trends but not personal information.
16. If an employee feels it is important for the Department to be aware of his or her circumstances, then the employee may sign a confidentiality waiver authorising the EAP service provider to inform the Department of the issue.

## **Cost**

17. EAP counselling is free to employees, their immediate families and/or household members.
18. In some situations, an EAP counsellor may suggest that specialised counselling may be of benefit. In these circumstances, the counsellor will make every effort to recommend a service provider that is either free, covered by health insurance or has a fee scale based on the employee's ability to pay.
19. Any counselling that may be required in addition to paragraphs 7 and 8 will not be paid by the Department but is the sole responsibility of the employee, their immediate families and/or household members as applicable.

## **Leave to attend appointments**

20. Employees may use personal or annual leave to attend EAP appointments.