

Policy Name	Communicable Diseases
Policy Type	HR
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Version	1
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**Policy Number** HR29

**Policy Name** Communicable Diseases

## Summary

West Daly Regional Council recognises that there can be a strong risk of exposure to highly communicable diseases.

The purpose of this policy is:

1. to provide strategies for infection control and management of biological hazards to eliminate or minimise the level of risk to employees and other persons;
2. ensure that employees are aware of their obligations to help mitigate the risk of communicable diseases in the workplace.

Section 3 of the policy statement will be enforced when the World Health Organisation (WHO) and/or the Australian Government Department of Health, or Northern Territory Government declare a country, city or community at risk of any highly communicable diseases.

This policy applies to all Elected Members and employees of West Daly Regional Council. It provides for the general principles of monitoring ones health for communicable diseases in the workplace for all Elected Members, employees and persons contracted to perform work for or on behalf of Council.

## Definitions

**Workplace Communicable Disease** is a communicable disease is one that can be contracted through work, from many different sources.

**Communicable / Communicable Disease** is the spread of a disease from one person to another; or from an animal to a person.

**WHO** is the World Health Organisation

**CEO** refers to the Chief Executive Officer of West Daly Regional Council appointed in accordance with the Local Government Act.

**Council** refers to West Daly Regional Council.

**Employees** refers to any employee, contractor, volunteer, agents etc. of West Daly Regional Council.

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## Policy Statement

This policy outlines the processes to be followed in managing the risk of exposure to employees of highly communicable diseases and the organisation's requirements and employees rights to access leave accrual or entitlements.

Council has a duty of care under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 (NT) to provide a safe workplace. In relation to communicable diseases, this includes:

- knowing which diseases can be contracted in the workplace through exposure to people, animals, soils and plant matter
- assessing the risk of these potential diseases being transmitted to employees
- mitigating the risk of exposure from employees returning from travel in countries identified as being at high-risk of communicable disease.

### 1. Prevention strategies for communicable diseases

Council will follow the guidelines issued by the WHO, Australian Government Department of Health and Northern Territory Government to ensure that adequate infection prevention, control and containment measures are adopted, monitored and reviewed to eliminate or minimise the risk of communicable disease exposure to employees and other persons.

Where a risk of communicable disease exposure has been identified for an employee cohort the Council will assess and where possible fund an appropriate vaccination program.

Management must ensure that employees and other persons, where appropriate, use personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimise the spread of communicable diseases.

Where PPE is unavailable due to a lack of supply, employees will not be forced to undertake a task where a risk of contracting a communicable disease exists.

Employees are required to follow standard hygiene practices to minimise the risk of infection and spread throughout the workplace. These include:

- cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze
- wash your hands or use hand sanitiser after you cough or sneeze
- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 30 seconds
  - after coughing or sneezing
  - before preparing food or eating
  - after toilet use
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Employees are required to self-manage in accordance with this policy and employees when unwell can access leave provisions as outlined in Council's Enterprise Agreement.

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## **2. Procedures to minimise the spread of communicable diseases**

When the workplace is considered to be at risk of a localised communicable disease, a human health risk assessment should be conducted to consider the following factors:

- how the disease/s can be transmitted
- the current work practices and control measures
- the adequacy of current control measures
- the employees exposure

If the risk assessment identifies any uncontrolled or inadequately controlled risks the following control measures are to be implemented:

- eliminating employee exposure
- safe work methods; such as hand washing
- widespread disinfection protocols
- vaccinations for at risk employees
- issuing of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- education and training
- exclusion
- isolation

Employees have a responsibility to ensure their own health and the health of others in their workplace is maintained; and therefore, they should be aware of their responsibilities and conscientious of minimising the risk of acquiring and transferring infections between people.

The CEO may enforce exclusions on the workplace. This will be assessed on a case by case basis considering the nature and exposure of the communicable disease.

Communicable diseases change from time to time. Employees should refer to the Australian Government Department of Health, Northern Territory Government and WHO websites for up to date communicable diseases.

## **3. Traveling to or from a country at risk of highly communicable diseases**

Where an employee is travelling to or from a country or city that is considered at risk by the WHO, Australian Government Department of Health or Northern Territory Government, they are to:

- make themselves aware of all the risks associated with the country or city they are visiting or returning from, and
- ensure that they are familiar with the requirements of this procedure, including the need to seek a medical clearance before returning to work
- advise their General Manager of destinations and transiting country's or city's prior to travel commences

The following process will be followed when an employee returns from a country or city where communicable disease/s have been reported, and the country or city is considered at risk by the WHO, Australian Government Department of Health or Northern Territory Government

- Before returning to work, the employee will be required to undergo a medical examination and produce a medical certificate at their own expense, confirming that he/she is not suffering from any of the symptoms associated with the communicable disease.
- If an employee elects not to undertake a medical examination as required above, the employee will be directed not to return to work. Appropriate medical and legal advice will then be sought about the particular case.
- Employees should refer to health guidelines for timeframes recommended for communicable diseases including timeframes for self-isolation.
- If any employee displays symptoms similar to those associated with a given disease within the timeframes considered to be at risk by the WHO, Australian Government Department of Health or Northern Territory Government, they will be directed to not attend work until they obtain further medical examination and a clearance to return to work.
- For any absence required from work, leave is to be in accordance with Council's Enterprise Agreement and accessed in the following order:
  - Personal leave
  - Annual leave
  - Leave Without Pay
  - Long service leave (minimum 4 weeks)

The following links are available to all employees that can assist in managing exposure as outlined in this procedure:

<https://health.nt.gov.au/> (NT Health)

[www.securent.nt.gov.au](http://www.securent.nt.gov.au) (NT Government)

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int) (World Health Organisation)

[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au) (Department of Health)

[www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au) (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

#### **4. Records Management and Privacy**

At all times an individual's information regarding their personal health and wellbeing must remain private and confidential in compliance with Council's records management and privacy policies.

Health or personal information:

- Should only be used for the purpose for which it was collected
- Must not be disclosed to any other person (except with the consent of that person)
- Must be held securely for the prescribed requisite period of time

Where there is a risk that an employee has exposed other employees or members of the public to a communicable disease, then Council will advise other employees or members of the public whom that employee may have exposed to a communicable disease.

Council will at all times take steps to protect the privacy of individuals and not disclose the name of the employee, only the nature of the exposure.

#### **REFERENCES**

[Work Health Safety Act NT – 2012](#)

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[Work Health Safety Regulations NT – 2012](#)

[Department of Health Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Disease Incidents of National Significance](#)

GOV13 Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

S01 WH&S Manual

WDRC Enterprise Agreement

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

*Chief Executive Officer*