
**NARROMINE SHIRE COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING BUSINESS PAPER – 12 MAY 2021
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE REPORT**

The following Questions on Notice have been received by Cr Hamilton: -

1. *In the last 24 months, how many staff have ceased employment at Narromine Shire Council?*

Response from General Manager

Between 30 April 2019 and 30 April 2021, 23 full time and 2 part time employees have left Council's employment.

Response from General Manager

2. *With reference to my question 16 of the April meeting of Council's "Questions with Notice" where the second part of the question was not addressed, I now resubmit the question: "Can Council advise on the specific requirements for staff to comply with in regards to workplace bullying and can Council advise if those requirements are being fully complied with?"*

Response from General Manager

To the best of my knowledge, Council's policies in relation to workplace bullying are being complied with.

All allegations of workplace bullying are taken seriously and properly investigated in accordance with the provisions of Council's adopted policies and procedures.

3. *Given the workplace staff welfare issues recently in the public domain regarding an adjacent Council area, are there any identified ongoing workplace staff culture risks within this Council?*

Response from General Manager

Council conducted a comprehensive staff engagement survey in 2018 to better understand the quality of current work practices that affect employee engagement and organisational performance. A number of themes were explored including ethics, performance appraisal, safety, facilities, rewards and recognition, supervision, motivation and teamwork, learning and development, diversity, wellness etc. Based on this an action plan was created to capitalise on strengths and address development areas.

Another staff engagement survey will be conducted later in the year.

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4. *In the term of this Council have systemic risks to staff welfare been identified?*

Response from General Manager

Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy workforce for its employees. In particular, Council has a risk management approach to identify, assess, eliminate and control hazards which have the potential to harm employees. Work related incidents are investigated and steps taken to prevent recurrence. Work health and safety training is provided to all employees. Council's Work Health and Safety Committee meets regularly to assess and consider work health and safety risks and impacts. This Committee provides recommendations to the General Manager. Appropriate Work Health and safety information is regularly disseminated to staff.

Council is also committed to injury management and the timely return of employees to duties in accordance with relevant legislation.

5. *Are there any current identified risks to staff mental health that are not able to be addressed by staff implementation of the "Code of Conduct", the "Workplace Bullying Policy", and "Grievance Resolution Policy"?*

Response from General Manager

Identified mental health risks are addressed through a number of processes. These include providing mental health education to raise awareness, increasing understanding and encouraging open discussion; providing work life balance; providing access to counselling support where required; matching job roles to skills and abilities; encouraging two-way feedback; providing effective leadership etc.

6. *Is it the position of this Council that the "Code of Conduct", The "Workplace Bullying Policy", and the "Grievance Resolution Policy" is adequately protecting the interests and welfare of staff and council officials?*

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Response from General Manager

Council has a number of other internal policies and processes which support the welfare of our staff.

In addition to these internal policies and processes, Council's Consultative Committee provides a forum for consultation between employer and employees that encourages a free and open exchange of views with reference to award implementation, training, organisation restructure, job redesign, salary systems, communication and education mechanisms, performance management systems, and health and wellbeing programs.

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Council has also established a Health and Wellbeing Committee which considers all aspects of health and wellbeing with a focus on mental health. Various wellbeing activities are provided in accordance with recommendations from the Committee.

In addition, Council provides staff with subsidised gym memberships; annual flu vaccinations, and skin checks.

Council organises training in Code of Conduct, Dignity and Respect and Manual Handling every two years. In addition, mental health first aid training has been undertaken with a number of employees appointed as mental health first aid officers. In recognition of the training undertaken and supporting mechanisms, Council has been recognised as a Gold Mental Health First Aid Skilled Workplace.

Council has an Employee Assistance Program which supports the emotional and mental health of our employees. The EAP provides a confidential range of counselling services to staff to assist them in overcoming personal and/or work-related problems which may be affecting their performance at work and/or emotional wellbeing. Staff are able to confidentially contact the provider directly or request assistance from the Human Resources team.

Council has also provided a confidential wellbeing check in tool to staff. At risk employees were contacted by mental health experts within 24 hours for a conversational check in and referral for support.