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Purpose

This protocol provides clear guidance for HSRs on responding to psychosocial disclosures, including distress, mental health concerns, and sensitive matters raised by workers.

It ensures:

- appropriate escalation
- protection of HSR wellbeing
- alignment with ANU psychosocial risk management framework

Scope

Applies to all HSRs and Deputy HSRs across ANU.

Principles

- Immediate safety takes priority
- HSRs are not counsellors or support providers
- Psychosocial risks are managed through ANU systems
- Early escalation is critical
- HSR wellbeing must be protected

When a Worker Raises a Psychosocial Concern

This may include:

- distress related to work or organisational change
- mental health concerns
- interpersonal conflict
- self-harm or suicidal ideation

Required Response (HSR Actions)

Step 1 – Acknowledge

- listen briefly and calmly
- acknowledge the concern
- do not probe or investigate

Step 2 – Assess Immediate Risk

If there is immediate risk to life or safety:

- contact emergency services / ANU emergency response

- notify the relevant manager immediately

Step 3 – Set Boundaries

Clearly communicate:

“I’m not the right person to support you clinically, but I will help connect you to the right support.”

Step 4 – Refer

Direct the worker to appropriate pathways:

- manager or supervisor
- HR / People & Culture
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- WHS team

Step 5 – Escalate

- ensure the matter is escalated through ANU processes
- record in Figtree where appropriate
- support escalation — do not retain ownership

Step 6 – Step Back

- do not provide ongoing support
- do not act as case manager
- allow the appropriate system to manage the matter

What HSRs Must Not Do

HSRs must not:

- provide counselling or therapy
- assess mental health or suicide risk
- promise confidentiality where risk exists
- investigate or manage complex issues
- take personal responsibility for outcomes

Support for HSRs

Following exposure to distressing matters, HSRs are encouraged to:

- seek debrief support
- access EAP
- engage WHS or manager support
- step back where needed

Relationship to WHSMS

This protocol aligns with:

- WHSMS Handbook Chapter 3.15 (Psychosocial Risk Management)
- Chapter 3.16 (Incident Management)

- ANU support and reporting pathways

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