

# Workplace health and safety overview for university clinical placements

## Arrangements for clinical placements

As a student undertaking a clinical placement in the QAS, your health, safety and wellbeing is just as important to us as that of our employees.

If you need any information or have any questions or concerns, talk to your university placement coordinator or your QAS clinical placement supervisor.

## QAS health, safety and wellbeing: a core value

The ability to care for our patients relies directly on the safety of our people. Therefore, to support the provision of quality ambulance and patient care services, the QAS has embedded health and safety into the organisation as a core value.

Each year the QAS respond to requests for assistance in many diverse circumstances. These circumstances often present significant and unique challenges to the physical and psychological safety of our workforce. Despite these challenges, the QAS does not accept that injuries are inevitable.

The QAS strives to actively learn from every hazard, near miss, injury or illness and to continue to improve our health and safety performance. This is achieved through understanding the unique risks that our work creates, working to effectively manage those risks, removing workplace hazards and eliminating injuries. Put simply, the QAS is committed to ensuring our workforce is able to go home safe, healthy and well at the end of every working day.

The QAS has robust and contemporary health and safety frameworks, policies, procedures, systems and processes that are integrated into the business and operational areas of the QAS to achieve excellence in ambulance services and clinical care.

All frameworks, policies, procedures, systems and processes can be accessed through your QAS clinical placement supervisor.



## QAS commitment to all

The QAS will ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of QAS employees, volunteers, students and other persons affected by the work carried out by the QAS. This will be achieved by:

- ▶ Applying the legislative requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to ensure the health and safety of all persons.
- ▶ Providing QAS specific health and safety policies, procedures, systems and processes that are easily accessible.
- ▶ Senior executives demonstrating safety leadership in day to day activities.
- ▶ Actively engaging the workforce in the identification of health and safety hazards, controlling the risk associated with these hazards, to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable.
- ▶ Continually reviewing clinical and operational equipment to ensure the equipment and the way in which it is used is safe.
- ▶ Providing an environment where health and safety matters will be communicated in a consultative, open, transparent and participative way, leading to positive outcomes.
- ▶ Responding to a health and safety incident in an expedient and supportive manner and investigating to a standard to minimise reoccurrence.
- ▶ In the unfortunate event that a student sustains an injury or illness, the QAS will support the student through appropriate liaison with the university.

## Health and safety strategy and plan

The QAS Health and Safety Strategy and Plan outlines the ongoing commitment to effective leadership, a physically and psychologically safe and healthy work environment, culture and work design. This is how the QAS will continue to build a safe and healthy organisation for our people and patients within a dynamic, critical and 24-hour operation.

## Safe systems for workforce and patient safety

The QAS workplace health and safety (WHS) management system is a set of interrelated or interacting elements, which establish health and safety policies, objectives and processes.

The QAS is committed to ensuring that we achieve the required WHS performance through effective governance and planning mechanisms.

Local, day to day involvement of all employees, students and volunteers in the health and safety of their work is actively encouraged, to deal with emergent issues and to identify opportunities for improvement.

WHS performance is actively monitored and assessed through a number of means including consultation with the workforce, in-field and workplace inspections, dynamic monitoring during operational activities, incident management and establishing WHS risk registers.

## Identifying hazards and managing risk

In the QAS, hazard and risk management activities are approached proactively and as a positive opportunity to eliminate or minimise actual and potential harm to patients and our workforce.

The QAS is very active in the identification of hazards and management of risk, particularly in the following key health and safety areas:

- ▶ manual tasking activities (including patient mobility and use of equipment)
- ▶ exposure to occupational violence
- ▶ exposure to biological hazards and transmission of infectious disease
- ▶ driving and operation of ambulance vehicles
- ▶ fatigue management
- ▶ psychological health (critical incidents and workplace issues)
- ▶ specialised operational activities (operational centres, aircraft, marine craft, special events).

Students, like all QAS employees, are actively encouraged to report health and safety hazards and to be involved in identifying suitable controls to mitigate risk.

Students who identify a hazard in the course of their work should deal with it if they are able to and if not, report it to their QAS clinical placement supervisor immediately, so the hazard can be recorded, assessed and appropriately actioned. Employees record the hazard in the QAS Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) database system.

The SHE system and SHE instructional information is available to employees on the QAS Portal, and can be accessed from within a QAS office, or externally when logging into the QAS Portal via a home computer or operational iPad. Students do not have access to the SHE system and therefore must notify their clinical placement supervisor or another QAS employee supervising their work of any hazards identified, as soon as possible.

## Reporting, investigating and managing health and safety incidents

All employees are expected to report and record WHS incidents on the SHE system. As with hazards, students must notify their QAS clinical placement supervisor or another QAS employee supervising their work of any incident, including on the way to or from the placement, as soon as possible.

Once an incident is reported, the system will automatically notify the nominated supervisor and local Health and Safety Advisor (HSA). Typically, supervisors will investigate the incident.

Reporting and investigating WHS incidents enables the QAS to:

- ▶ provide immediate and ongoing support to employees affected
- ▶ identify all factors contributing to the incident
- ▶ review the effectiveness of current controls
- ▶ put in place strategies to prevent similar incidents
- ▶ share lessons learned and contribute to organisation-wide learning.

## Supporting students - managing health, rehabilitation and wellbeing

All students who may need support to safely participate in their placement, are strongly encouraged to have a confidential discussion with their QAS clinical placement supervisor and/or their university placement co-ordinator in the first instance.

The QAS Staff Support Service, known as Priority One, exists to promote the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of QAS employees, volunteers and their families. Students undertaking clinical placements can be afforded access to the service, through their QAS clinical placement

supervisor, should the need arise during the placement. Alternately students may choose to utilise the student wellbeing/support services provided by their university.

## Building emergency procedures

Students are required to ensure that they are familiar with the building emergency procedures and equipment in their workplace/s, through receiving instructions in their workplace within two days of commencement.

Fire and evacuation training is a mandatory requirement for all QAS employees, students and volunteers. Talk to your QAS clinical placement supervisor about the specific requirements which need to be completed in your workplace.

## Key points

- ▶ The health, safety and wellbeing of ourselves, our patients and others is a core value of the QAS. This means the QAS is committed to ensuring our workforce is able to go home safe, healthy and well at the end of every working day.
- ▶ The QAS strives to actively learn from every hazard, near miss, injury or illness and strive to continue to improve health and safety performance.
- ▶ All employees, students and volunteers are responsible to contribute to the health and safety of themselves and others, through their day-to-day actions.
- ▶ The QAS provides comprehensive and respectful support services for employees experiencing health conditions impacting on their safe participation in work and to optimise the wellbeing of all employees and their families. Students will also be supported in partnership with your university and their programs.