

Garden Maintenance and Softscaping

Business Name:		ABN:	
Business Address:			
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:	

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	



RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			Elimination Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	Substitution Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	Engineering Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
4A	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
3H	Review and approve additional controls before task starts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
2M	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
1L	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
Catastrophic	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
Major	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
Moderate	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
Minor	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
Insignificant	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. WHS Governance, Roles and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clearly defined WHS responsibilities for managers, supervisors and workers in garden maintenance and softscaping operations Inadequate consultation with workers on changes to work methods, new sites or new equipment Failure to integrate WHS Act 2011 duties into business planning and contract management for landscape and grounds maintenance projects Inconsistent application of WHS policies across different sites, crews and subcontractors Insufficient worker participation in hazard identification and risk assessment, particularly for remote or one-off jobs (e.g. clearance near dams, canopy seed collection, regeneration work) Absence of due diligence processes for officers to verify that WHS systems are implemented and resourced 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a WHS management system aligned with WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulation and relevant Codes of Practice, with documented policies for garden maintenance and softscaping activities Define and document WHS roles, accountabilities and delegations for directors, managers, supervisors, HSRs and workers, including for contracting and project planning functions Implement formal WHS consultation arrangements (e.g. HSRs, WHS committees, toolbox talks) that specifically address softscaping and grounds maintenance work, including public grounds and parks Require WHS considerations to be embedded in business decisions such as tendering, subcontractor engagement, purchasing of machinery and chemicals, and scheduling of high-risk work (e.g. work near water bodies or steep banks) Introduce a structured WHS meeting and reporting cycle (e.g. monthly management review) to monitor incidents, near misses, audit findings and corrective actions across all garden maintenance crews Provide officer-level WHS due diligence training and maintain records of site visits, safety walk-throughs and research activities specific to landscaping and regeneration projects 	3H
2. Planning, Site Assessment and Job Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate pre-job site assessments for varied environments such as scrubland, dams, green spaces, parks, sports surfaces and residential gardens Failure to identify site-specific hazards such as unstable ground, steep slopes, water edges, overhead services, buried services, or hazardous vegetation (e.g. toxic plants, thorny species, invasive species) Poor assessment of access and egress for people, vehicles and equipment including maxi-roll turf, large pots and mature trees Inadequate planning for work near dams and water storage facilities, increasing risk of drowning and vehicle or plant roll-over 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal pre-job planning and site assessment procedure for all garden maintenance and softscaping tasks, using a standardised checklist accessible via mobile devices Require documented site hazard assessments for new or changed worksites (e.g. new park regeneration area, new dam clearance project) and prior to commencing seasonal works such as hydro seeding or sports surface maintenance Include mandatory assessment items for terrain stability, proximity to water, vegetation type (including toxic or thorny species), overhead and underground services, and public interface Establish criteria for when additional controls or permits are required (e.g. working within specified distances of dams or waterways, work on steep slopes, work at height for canopy seed collection) Introduce a formal job allocation protocol requiring supervisors to match tasks to worker competencies, licences, training records and health limitations, with documented sign-off Ensure scheduling tools incorporate weather forecasts, heat and UV alerts, storm warnings and bushfire danger ratings, with authority for supervisors to defer or modify outdoor work based on triggers 	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No systematic consideration of environmental conditions (heat, UV, storms, bushfire danger, flooding) on scheduling of work such as bush regeneration or heavy strimming Job allocation not considering worker competency, fatigue, physical capability or medical restrictions 			
3. Competency, Induction and Task-Specific Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers operating garden machinery (e.g. strimmers, tillers, mechanical rakes, potting machines) without verified competency Inadequate training in manual handling of heavy or awkward items such as maxi-turf rolls, large pots, mature trees, and bulk potting mix Insufficient understanding of hazards associated with bush regeneration, invasive species removal and toxic plant management Lack of competency in working around water, steep banks and unstable ground during vegetation clearance near dams and waterways Failure to train workers in recognition of plant and animal hazards (e.g. snakes, insects, shellfish, allergic plants) Workers unaware of procedures for glass house inspections, indoor plant care and confined or restricted space considerations 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a documented competency framework for garden maintenance and softscaping roles, including defined training and assessment requirements for each equipment type and activity Provide structured induction covering WHS obligations, hazard identification, reporting processes, emergency procedures and specific risks associated with landscaping, shrub management, sports surface upkeep and public grounds work Implement task-specific training modules for powered equipment (e.g. strimmers, tillers, mechanical rakes) and tools (loppers, pruners, scythes, machetes), and specialised operations such as hydro seeding and transplanting mature trees Require competency assessments (theory and practical) before authorising workers to operate machinery or undertake high-risk tasks such as work near water bodies or canopy seed collection Deliver regular refresher training on manual handling, ergonomics, and handling of robust or thorny vegetation, with particular focus on moving maxi rolls, large pots and tree saplings Maintain detailed training records in a central system and link to job allocation so that only competent and authorised workers are rostered to relevant tasks 	2M
4. Plant, Equipment and Tool Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate maintenance and inspection of powered tools such as strimmers, hedge trimmers, tilling equipment, mechanical rakes and potting machines Use of unsafe, poorly guarded or un-maintained equipment, increasing risk of lacerations, entanglement and ejection of debris Lack of system for tagging out defective tools and machinery used in 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<p>hedge trimming, shrub reshaping and edging operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of non-standard or incompatible attachments on equipment used for heavy duty strimming, tilling or raking • Inadequate storage and security of equipment leading to unauthorised use or damage • Failure to provide plant and equipment suitable for the environment, such as unstable slopes, damp ground, or near water bodies 		[REDACTED]	
5. Hazardous Chemicals, Fuels and Biological Agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate management of herbicides, fertilisers, soil amendments and cleaning agents used in garden and turf maintenance • Poor fuel storage and handling systems for petrol, diesel and two-stroke mixes used in strimmers, tillers and mowers • Lack of procedures for handling and disposing of contaminated plant material, invasive species and toxic plants removed from animal grazes • Exposure to moulds, fungi, bacteria and allergens in potting compost, mulch and leaf litter • Incorrect labelling and storage of chemicals in glass houses, tool rooms and maintenance sheds • No system to ensure Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are current and accessible at all worksites 		[REDACTED]	2M
6. Traffic, Mobile Plant and Public Interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncontrolled interaction between workers, vehicles, ride-on equipment and members of the public in parks, reserves, sports grounds and residential areas • Inadequate traffic management plans for edging footpaths, roadside vegetation management and loading/unloading heavy equipment 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of systems for safe movement of vehicles and trailers when transporting maxi turf rolls, large pots and trees Poor management of exclusion zones around moving machinery such as mechanical rakes, strimmers and tillers in public or shared spaces Insufficient planning for pedestrian detours and signage during turf laying, hydro seeding or shrub layer management near walkways Failure to coordinate with asset owners when camouflaging utility assets or working near underground or aboveground services 		[REDACTED]	
7. Manual Handling, Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive bending, twisting and lifting during planting, edging, raking, hedge trimming and shrub reshaping Handling heavy or awkward loads such as maxi-roll turf, large pots, potting m bags, mature trees and bundles of thorny or robust vegetation Prolonged use of hand tools (loppers, pruners, scythes, machetes) and vibrating equipment (strimmers, tillers, mechanical rakes, loading trucks) and musculoskeletal disorders Poorly designed work methods for tasks like moving plant pots, emptying grass bags, operating potting machines and installing tree supports Inadequate systems to control cumulative strain from high-volume commercial landscaping and public ground work Lack of consideration of individual worker capability, height, strength and any pre-existing musculoskeletal conditions 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
8. Work Environment, Weather and Outdoor Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged exposure to sun, heat and UV during outdoor landscaping, turf laying, shrub management and public grounds maintenance 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse weather conditions (storms, strong winds, heavy rain, lightning) affecting tree planting, hedge trimming, sports surface maintenance and dam-side vegetation works • Slips, trips and falls due to wet, uneven or debris-covered ground, including thatching yards, hydro seeded surfaces and freshly raked areas • Exposure to cold, wind chill and reduced visibility during early morning or evening work • Inadequate control of dust, pollen and airborne spores during raking leaves, clipping robust vegetation and clearing scrubland • Failure to adapt work practices during periods of high bushfire risk, flood alerts or extreme weather warnings 		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
9. Biological, Flora and Fauna Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to toxic plants, irritant sap and allergenic species during removal of invasive plants, shrub layer management and clearance of vegetation from animal grazes • Injury from thorns or spiny plants during removal, transport and disposal of robust vegetation • Bites or stings from snakes, spiders, insects, bees and wasps in bush regeneration sites, parks and reserves, and long grass • Contact with contaminated water or soil around dams, water storage facilities and poorly drained areas • Inadequate systems for identifying and managing biosecurity risks associated with invasive species removal and seed collection • Lack of organisational knowledge base on local plant and animal hazards relevant to specific regions and client sites 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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10. Psychosocial Risks, Workload and Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High physical workload and time pressure during seasonal peaks in commercial landscaping, turf laying and grounds maintenance contracts Extended or irregular working hours for remote work sites, large regeneration projects or sports surface maintenance before events Low job control and inadequate communication leading to stress and disengagement in mobile garden crews Inadequate systems for managing lone or isolated workers performing tasks such as inspection of glass houses, indoor plant care, or remote bush regeneration Poor management of workplace conflict, bullying or client aggression when working in public or residential settings Lack of organisational processes to identify and address fatigue risk in scheduling and resourcing decisions 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
11. Emergency Preparedness and Incident Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear emergency procedures for injuries from sharp tools, plant and equipment, or falls on uneven ground Insufficient planning for water-related emergencies during vegetation clearance near dams and water storage facilities Lack of first aid coverage and equipment for teams working across multiple dispersed sites and parks Ineffective response to severe allergic reactions, heat stress, snake bites or chemical exposures during outdoor work Poor incident reporting and investigation processes leading to repeated failures and systemic issues remaining unaddressed Inadequate communication processes during critical events, particularly for 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	isolated workers and crews in large reserves			
12. Contractor Management and Labour Hire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent WHS standards and practices between principal contractor, subcontractors and labour hire workers on landscaping projects Failure to verify competency, licences and training of subcontractors performing specialised tasks such as hydro seeding, tree transplanting or potting machine operation Inadequate communication of site hazards, emergency procedures and work rules to external parties working in parks, reserves and commercial premises Lack of clarity over who controls particular risks where multiple PCBUs are involved in public grounds or regeneration projects Insufficient monitoring of subcontractor compliance with agreed WHS requirements and safe systems of work Poor integration of contractor incident data into the organisation's WHS performance monitoring and improvement processes 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
13. Information, Documentation and Record Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical WHS information (procedures, risk assessments, emergency plans) not accessible to workers in the field Outdated or inconsistent documentation relating to garden maintenance and softscaping activities across different sites and clients Incomplete records of inspections, maintenance, training, incidents and audits, limiting the ability to demonstrate compliance with the WHS Act 2011 Failure to capture lessons learned from incidents, near misses and field observations into updated guidance materials 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overly complex or impractical documentation that discourages use and leads to work-arounds or non-compliance Poor version control of SWMS, risk assessments and standard operating procedures used by mobile crews 		[REDACTED]	
14. Continuous Improvement, Audit and Performance Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of systematic monitoring of WHS performance across different types of garden and landscape work (e.g. indoor plants, glass houses, sports surfaces, bush regeneration) Failure to identify emerging risks from new equipment, materials or work methods such as novel hydro seeding systems or new plant species Inconsistent follow-through on corrective actions from incidents, inspections and audits Insufficient use of leading indicators (e.g. near miss data, behavioural observations) to prevent serious harm Safety initiatives not tailored to specific operational contexts resulting in poor engagement from field crews Over-reliance on PPE and protective equipment rather than higher-order controls in the hierarchy of control 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

Queensland & Australian Capital Territory

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Victoria

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

New South Wales

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

Western Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2020
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

Northern Territory

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/factsheets-and-resources/codes-of-practice>

Safe Work Australia Links

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

South Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

Model Codes of Practice

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

Tasmania

Work Health and Safety Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.