

Zoo Safety

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:	

SAMPLE

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			<b>Elimination</b> Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	<b>Substitution</b> 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.	<b>Engineering</b> 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:	
<b>4A</b>	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.
<b>3H</b>	Review and approve additional controls before task starts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
<b>2M</b>	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
<b>1L</b>	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

  

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
<b>Catastrophic</b>	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
<b>Major</b>	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
<b>Moderate</b>	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
<b>Minor</b>	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
<b>Insignificant</b>	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. Governance, WHS Duties & Safety Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PCBU and Officers not fully understanding or discharging WHS due diligence obligations under WHS Act 2011</li> <li>Lack of clear WHS objectives and measurable safety performance indicators for zoo operations</li> <li>Inadequate resourcing for safety-critical functions (e.g. animal containment systems, emergency response, training)</li> <li>Inconsistent safety leadership and poor safety culture across animal, maintenance, guest services and contractor teams</li> <li>Failure to integrate WHS risk management into strategic and financial decision-making for the zoo</li> <li>Ineffective consultation with health and safety representatives (HSRs) and workers on zoo-specific risks</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a WHS Governance Framework that explicitly references and aligns with WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulation requirements for zoos and animal facilities</li> <li>Assign and document WHS due diligence responsibilities for Officers (Board, CEO, senior management) with regular WHS briefings and documented activities</li> <li>Set zoo-wide WHS objectives and leading/lagging indicators (e.g. incident rates, inspection completion, training compliance, emergency drill performance) and review at executive meetings</li> <li>Develop a documented WHS Policy signed by the most senior Officer, communicated to all workers, volunteers, contractors and tenants</li> <li>Implement formal WHS consultation mechanisms (HSR structures, WHS committee, toolbox talks) specifically addressing animal, visitor and laboratory/aquatic risks</li> <li>Integrate WHS risk assessments and costs into annual budgeting and capital planning (e.g. enclosure upgrades, barriers, CCTV, emergency equipment)</li> <li>Conduct periodic independent WHS audits focused on zoo operations, report to the Board and track close-out of findings</li> </ul>	3H
2. Zoo Emergency & Incident Management (Including Animal Escape Drills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate or outdated emergency management plan for animal escapes, aggressive animal behaviour, fire, severe weather or chemical incidents</li> <li>Poorly designed or untested animal escape and recapture procedures, including for dangerous animals and marine species</li> <li>Insufficient training and drills for staff, including confusion over roles, communication protocols and muster points</li> <li>Lack of integration between zoo emergency procedures and external emergency services (police, fire, ambulance, wildlife authorities)</li> <li>Ineffective public communication and crowd control strategies during an incident, leading to panic and secondary injuries</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain a comprehensive Emergency Management Plan covering animal escape, dangerous animal response, fire, severe weather, security threats, medical emergencies and aquatic incidents</li> <li>Create detailed Animal Escape Response Procedures for different risk categories (e.g. large carnivores, primates, venomous species, sharks), including clear shoot/no-shoot and sedation authority protocols</li> <li>Implement a scheduled emergency drill program, including full-scale animal escape simulations and water rescue scenarios, with documented objectives, observers and debriefs</li> <li>Provide role-specific emergency training to all relevant workers (keepers, vets, security, guest services, maintenance) including communication, cordoning, crowd management and safe observation distances</li> <li>Formalise communication arrangements with local police, fire and ambulance services and share zoo maps, animal risk profiles and rendezvous points</li> <li>Use public address systems, variable message signage and pre-prepared scripts for orderly visitor instructions during drills and incidents</li> <li>Adopt a debrief and continuous improvement process after every drill or real incident, capturing lessons learned, updating procedures and re-training where required</li> <li>Include psychosocial risk management in emergency planning (e.g. peer support, access to EAP, fatigue management) for staff involved in emergencies and drills</li> </ul>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fatigue, physical overexertion or psychological harm to staff during high-stress drills and real incidents</li> <li>Drills for animal escape scenarios not representative of credible worst-case events (e.g. multiple enclosure breach, night-time escape)</li> <li>Failure to review and improve procedures following drills, near misses or actual emergency events</li> </ul>			
3. Animal Containment & Enclosure Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enclosure design not meeting containment standards for species strength, climbing ability or digging behaviour</li> <li>Failure of physical barriers (fencing, glass, moats, mesh, locks) due to poor design, ageing infrastructure or corrosion</li> <li>Inadequate double-door / airlock systems for high-risk animals allowing accidental egress</li> <li>Insufficient separation between animals and public walkways or viewing areas leading to contact, bites, scratches or crush injuries</li> <li>Ineffective enclosure inspection and maintenance programs resulting in undetected defects</li> <li>Uncontrolled changes to enclosures (temporary works, enrichment devices, vegetation growth) creating escape pathways</li> <li>Failure of water barriers or aquatic enclosures (e.g. shark tanks) due to structural defects, water level changes or pump failures</li> <li>Over-reliance on behavioural conditioning instead of engineered containment for hazardous species</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt zoo-specific design standards and industry guidelines for enclosure strength, height, materials and clearances, verified by competent structural and animal behaviour specialists</li> <li>Implement a formal enclosure certification process prior to housing animals, including engineering sign-off and animal welfare review</li> <li>Establish and enforce a preventive maintenance schedule for all containment barriers, locks, moats and aquatic tanks with inspection checklists and defect tracking</li> <li>Use redundant containment systems (e.g. double barriers, airlocks, fail-safe locks) for high-risk or dangerous animals</li> <li>Control and document any temporary modifications (e.g. construction works, display changes, enrichment installations) through a permit and change-management process</li> <li>Install CCTV and intrusion detection where appropriate to monitor enclosure integrity and identify tampering or animal testing of boundaries</li> <li>Undertake periodic third-party audits of enclosure integrity and containment risk for high-consequence animals</li> <li>Integrate lessons from animal escape drills and incidents into enclosure design improvements and engineering controls</li> </ul>	2M
4. Public Interface, Visitor Safety & Crowd Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate physical separation between visitors and animals leading to</li> </ul>	4A		2M

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	<p>bites, scratches, falls, trampling or zoonotic exposure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly designed visitor flow causing congestion, crowding at popular exhibits or bottlenecks during emergencies</li> <li>• Insufficient or unclear signage on prohibited behaviours (feeding, touching, climbing barriers, flash photography) and animal hazards</li> <li>• Inadequate management of high-risk experiences (e.g. animal encounters, feeding sessions, behind-the-scenes tours, shark viewing areas)</li> <li>• Failure to consider children, people with disability and non-English-speaking visitors in risk controls and communications</li> <li>• Slips, trips and falls on pathways, viewing platforms, in wet areas near aquatic exhibits or during inclement weather</li> <li>• Inadequate supervision arrangements for school groups and other groups</li> <li>• Aggressive or non-compliant visitor behaviour (e.g. barrier climbing, object throwing, teasing animals, unmanaged through a clear system)</li> </ul>		<p>[REDACTED]</p>	
5. Staff Competency, Induction, Training & Competency Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of structured competency requirements for animal tank divers, veterinary staff and maintenance personnel</li> <li>• Inadequate induction covering zoo-specific hazards such as dangerous animals, zoonoses, confined spaces and aquatic risks</li> <li>• Informal, undocumented on-the-job training leading to inconsistent practices and knowledge gaps</li> <li>• Failure to verify competency for high-risk roles (e.g. emergency response team, firearm users, sedation teams, shark tank divers)</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient refresher training and skills decay for rarely used emergency procedures (e.g. animal recapture, mass evacuation)</li> <li>Volunteer and contractor staff not integrated into training systems and zoo risk awareness</li> <li>Language, literacy or cultural barriers resulting in misinterpretation of procedures and safety information</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
6. Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment & Change Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No systematic process for identifying new or emerging risks (e.g. new species, new shark exhibits, new technologies)</li> <li>Risk assessments not updated when enclosures, procedures or staffing arrangements change</li> <li>Failure to involve subject matter experts (e.g. experienced keepers, vets, divers, engineers) in risk assessment</li> <li>Informal changes to operations (e.g. new feeding shows, water sampling methods) implemented without structured review</li> <li>Inadequate evaluation of cumulative risks where multiple factors interact (e.g. heat, crowds and aggressive animals)</li> <li>Poor documentation and communication of risk conclusions to affected workers</li> <li>Lack of pre-implementation trials or pilot phases for major changes to animal management or aquatic systems</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
7. Contractor, Volunteer & Third-Party Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contractors (e.g. construction, maintenance, divers, laboratory services) not fully aware of zoo-specific risks and emergency procedures</li> <li>Poor coordination between contractor activities and animal schedules leading to stress, escapes or exposure to hazardous animals</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate verification of contractor qualifications, insurances and WHS systems, especially for high-risk tasks</li> <li>Volunteers undertaking work beyond their competence or without appropriate supervision</li> <li>Multiple PCBUs on site without clear allocation of WHS responsibilities and consultation arrangements</li> <li>Work near enclosures or aquatic systems (e.g. shark tank maintenance) undertaken without appropriate permits and isolation controls</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
8. Animal Handling, Transfer & Behavioural Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent procedures for moving animals between enclosures, including loading, unloading and transport</li> <li>Reliance on individual experience rather than standardised protocols for handling high-risk species</li> <li>Inadequate planning for sedation, restraint and veterinary interventions leading to uncontrolled animal reactions</li> <li>Behavioural changes in animals due to breeding cycles, illness, stress or environmental changes not incorporated into risk controls</li> <li>Lack of structured review of aggressive or unpredictable animal incidents or near misses</li> <li>Inadequate segregation of staff roles during animal handling (e.g. catch, control, observe, emergency override)</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	2M
9. Aquatic Systems, Shark Tanks & Water Sampling Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System failure of aquatic life support systems (pumps, filtration, oxygenation) affecting animal welfare and creating contaminated water conditions</li> <li>Uncontrolled access to edges of shark tanks or aquatic exhibits during water sampling or maintenance</li> <li>Inadequate separation between sampling personnel and dangerous</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>marine animals, leading to bites or immersion incidents</li> <li>Lack of standardised procedures for water sampling from shark tanks, including working at heights, over-water access and manual handling of sampling equipment</li> <li>Electrical hazards from pumps, lighting and monitoring devices in wet environments</li> <li>Exposure of workers to hazardous chemicals (e.g. chlorine, disinfectants, treatment agents) used in water treatment and tank cleaning</li> <li>Failure to monitor and manage biological contamination or zoonotic agents during sampling and maintenance</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
10. Zoonoses, Biosecurity & Infection Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate identification and management of zoonotic disease risk associated with different species, including marine life</li> <li>Insufficient vaccination, health monitoring and occupational screening for at-risk staff</li> <li>Poor hygiene infrastructure (handwashing stations, disinfection facilities) at animal contact zones and aquatic work areas</li> <li>Substandard cleaning and waste management procedures for enclosures, food preparation areas and laboratories</li> <li>Inadequate biosecurity controls for animal introductions, transfers and quarantine, increasing disease transmission risk</li> <li>Failure to provide appropriate PPE and training for staff involved in necropsy, sample handling and water quality testing</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate response planning for zoonotic disease outbreaks impacting staff, animals or visitors</li> </ul>			
11. Plant, Equipment & Infrastructure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure of critical plant such as gates, winches, lifting devices, vehicles, mowers and feeding equipment near animal enclosures</li> <li>Uncontrolled movement of vehicles and mobile plant in public areas and back-of-house service roads</li> <li>Lack of guarding or interlocks on machinery used in food preparation, maintenance workshops or water treatment plants</li> <li>Degradation of infrastructure (paths, bridges, platforms, roofs) increasing collapse, fall or trip risks</li> <li>Poor management of hazardous energy (electrical, hydraulic, pneumatic) during maintenance on enclosures, gates or aquatic systems</li> <li>Inadequate inspection and testing of safety-critical equipment (emergency power, alarms, fire systems, dive gear)</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L
12. Environmental, Weather & Outdoor Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heat stress and dehydration for staff working outdoors or in non-air-conditioned enclosures</li> <li>Adverse weather events (e.g. high winds, flooding, bushfire smoke) affecting animals, enclosures, visitors and staff</li> <li>UV exposure for outdoor staff and volunteers, including those conducting drills and water sampling activities</li> <li>Reduced visibility and increased slip hazards during wet weather, particularly near aquatic exhibits and water sampling points</li> <li>Insufficient planning for after-hours or low-light work (e.g. night-time animal monitoring, emergency responses)</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental noise from animals, crowds or plant affecting communication during emergencies or drills</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
13. Psychosocial Risks, Fatigue & Welfare of Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to traumatic events (animal injury or death, serious incidents involving visitors or colleagues) leading to psychological harm</li> <li>High-stress conditions during animal escape drills and real emergency responses without adequate support</li> <li>Long or irregular hours, including early feeding, late-night monitoring and weekend work contributing to fatigue</li> <li>Role conflict or bullying behaviours between teams (animal care, security, management) undermining safety culture</li> <li>Insufficient mechanisms for workers to raise concerns about animal welfare, safety or ethical issues without fear of reprisal</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
14. WHS Monitoring, Reporting, Audit & Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under-reporting of incidents, near misses and unsafe conditions involving animals, visitors or plant</li> <li>Lack of trend analysis preventing early identification of systemic issues (e.g. recurring minor escapes, sampling near misses, slip incidents)</li> <li>Ineffective corrective action management leading to repeat incidents</li> <li>WHS inspections not tailored to zoo-specific risks (animal behaviour, aquatic systems, public interface)</li> <li>Poor feedback loops from emergency drills and water sampling practices into system improvements</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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SAMPLE

**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 IF 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/laws-and-compliance/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.