

Area Custodians intranet page (to be located under the [Working at CSIRO](#) parent page)

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Area Custodians

Objectives of the role

What is purpose of the Area Custodian role?

Area Custodians, a Corporate citizenship role, are appointed to help achieve the safe and effective management of operations in a given work area, and act as a point of contact and coordination on opportunities for HSE and other area improvements.

This includes understanding what assistance or direction must be provided for people to use equipment and materials safely, how the area and its equipment must be maintained, and being consulted when the area is modified (such as through the addition, removal, or upgrade of equipment).

What are the responsibilities of the Area Custodian?

While Area Custodians are appointed as a point of day-to-day contact and coordination of an area's operations, they are not expected to fulfil all of the requirements, below, on their own. They can seek assistance or delegate tasks to other area users.

Where relevant in the area for which they are responsible, the Area Custodian has the authority to ensure that:

- [Safe work instructions \(SWIs\)](#) are updated or developed to reflect the preferred method of working safely with plant/equipment, and hazard and risk control information is conveyed to staff in the area (such as via [area hazard posters](#)).
- Activities are only undertaken by appropriately trained or authorised staff.
- Housekeeping inspections are conducted on a regular basis by staff within the work group, as per the [HSE Housekeeping Procedure](#).
- Equipment is maintained in a safe working order. This includes ensuring that both functional and regulatory maintenance (such as electrical testing and tagging) for the plant and equipment has been organised by an appropriate person, and that any consumables are maintained.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is readily available to all staff in the area.
- The addition, removal or modification of an area, its plant, equipment or hazardous materials is safely managed and is fit for purpose. This includes obtaining necessary approvals or authorisations, reviewing hazard signage, and updating any associated registers and inventories (such as chemical inventories on [ChemAlert](#)).
- Waste is disposed according to the relevant waste stream (e.g., general, chemical, or biological waste, etc.).

Note: Area Custodians may be appointed for co-located areas with staff from different teams, or Business Units. It is important to acknowledge that all staff using the area are expected to comply with reasonable requests from the Area Custodian regardless of their team or Business Unit.

Can Area Custodians be held personally liable if a HSE incident occurs in their area?

Area Custodians will not be held personally liable for any HSE incidents in the course of carrying out their role while they are acting in good faith. Area Custodians are subject to the same general duty of care as other CSIRO staff or affiliates, which requires everyone to:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others; and
- comply with any reasonable instruction, policy or procedure from CSIRO in relation to health and safety.

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How the Area Custodian role functions with other staff in CSIRO

How are managers expected to support Area Custodians?

Line managers or supervisors have an important role in ensuring the safety of their staff. They must:

- Ensure risk assessments and safe work instructions (SWIs) are updated or developed to reflect the preferred method of working safely.
- Provide adequate resources for staff to safely undertake their work. This includes confirming that staff understand the hazards and agreed risk controls relevant to their work, and that they are competent and able to perform their work safely.
- Ensure that no new projects or significant variations of current work, and no new staff members or CSIRO affiliates, commence in an area without the Area Custodian (or other relevant staff such as CSIRO Business and Infrastructure Services (CBIS)) being consulted and agreeing to the proposed arrangements.
- Consult the Area Custodian, staff members, CSIRO affiliates, HSE staff and specialists to ensure all hazards are identified, the risks assessed and appropriate control strategies are developed and implemented in the area.
- Ensure PPE is readily available, as required.
- Emergency procedures are in place, and required equipment is available and maintained in order to manage emergencies in the area.

How are other staff expected to work with Area Custodians?

Staff members and CSIRO affiliates or students must take all reasonable actions to avoid harm to themselves, others, property or the environment, and stop any work activities if they perceive that a risk is unacceptable. They must:

- Actively participate and contribute to any risk assessment or development of SWIs relevant to their work.
- Adhere to any safety practices in the area, including the use of any risk control measures which have been put in place or using PPE provided.
- Follow the instructions of the Area Custodian with respect to HSE requirements of the area, including complying with any SWIs established for the area, and assist with any reasonable request of the Area Custodian to ensure the effective and safe operation of the area.
- Not use, add, remove or modify SWIs, plant, equipment, chemicals or infrastructure without prior consultation with the Area Custodian and relevant Line Manager.
- Maintain good housekeeping, and participate in housekeeping
- Dispose of waste into the appropriate waste stream.
- Report to the Area Custodian, or relevant manager, as soon as possible, any situation which could affect their health or safety, or any issues with the area's equipment, materials, chemicals or infrastructure.
- Promptly report HSE incidents, near-misses and hazards in the area to their manager and the Area Custodian. An incident report will then be logged in [LookIn2It](#).

What other roles may be available to support Area Custodians?

Local HSE Advisors are available to:

- Provide advice and assistance in the identification of hazards and implementation of risk controls associated with work in the area, and in the application of HSE procedures, forms and templates.
- Support and guide the completion of HSE incident investigations.
- Assist in the resolution of issues where staff are not complying with agreed safety practices.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) for the area may available to:

- Advocate for improvements in safety standards for the area.
- Assist in the resolution of issues where staff are not complying with agreed safety practices.

CSIRO Business and Infrastructure Services (CBIS) staff are available to:

- Organise the repair of faults in buildings or facilities.
- Assist in the design and installation of facilities to ensure regulatory compliance.

How are Business Units expected to support Area Custodians?

Business Units should organise routine (at least every 3 months) meetings for their Area Custodians to come together as a group and discuss ongoing issues or concerns in relation to the functioning of their role.

Area Custodians are strongly encouraged to attend these meetings and share learnings and contribute to joint problem solving across their networks.

How are Area Custodians expected to interact with each other?

Where multiple Area Custodians are appointed to a single area (for example, due to its size or complexity), they should work together in determining the requirements for the area and managing its operation.

Appointing Area Custodians

When should an Area Custodian be appointed?

Area Custodians should be formally appointed to have oversight of areas which are considered to be of medium or high risk by virtue of the equipment and/or materials they contain. This can include laboratories, workshops, tech bays, processing areas, etc.

How are Area Custodians appointed?

Line Managers with staff in an area are nominally responsible for identifying when an Area Custodian should be appointed. Candidates for an Area Custodian role must be consulted prior to it being offered. The scope of the role must be discussed with reference to their specific work area, and their agreement to undertake such a role must be confirmed.

Once a suitable candidate has been identified and accepted the role, they must be formally appointed (see attached links for *a template appointment letter*).

It is important to acknowledge that:

- Depending on the CSIRO site, there may be differences on the appropriate level of management that can appoint Area Custodians. For example, on smaller sites it may be appropriate for a Line Manager or Site Leader to appoint Area Custodians, but on larger, co-located sites, it may be more appropriate for a Business Unit's operational team to centrally manage appointments.
- Area Custodians may be appointed to co-located areas with staff from different teams or Business Units, and are responsible for the whole area (not just their team). Line managers with staff in the area should support and endorse the appointed Area Custodian(s).

How should time spent undertaking the role be provided and recognised?

Appropriate time must be formally provided to enable Area Custodians to undertake their role. Business Units are responsible for determining how to formally provide this time, which will depend on the size and complexity of the area which the Area Custodian is responsible for.

The following two methods are commonly used:

1. Between 5 and 15% of project time may be allocated to undertake the role.
2. Time allocated to the role may be included in the 'Other Non Project Related Activities' component of an individuals' Capability Days.

Area Custodians must also have their efforts recognised as part of their Annual Performance Agreement. Example APA statements are provided below:

Role	Objective	Performance indicators
Area Custodian	To help achieve the safe and effective management of operations in the assigned work area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive feedback received from laboratory users• Housekeeping schedule has been developed and followed• Other staff using the area have been provided with an induction• Confirm the chemical inventory has been maintained

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment and plant maintained in good condition and is safe to use
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How long should the term of appointment be for Area Custodians?

Area Custodian appointments must be reviewed at least every 2 years. If the candidate remains suitable for the role, then the appointment may be renewed.

What type of candidates are suitable to appoint as Area Custodians?

It is generally preferable to appoint full time, ongoing staff as Area Custodians. Where part time or term staff are considered for the role, it must be recognised that they will not always be available to provide assistance to the area and the extent to which the role may impact their capacity must be acknowledged.

There is no minimum CSOF level prescribed for an Area Custodian, but Line Management must recognise the level of responsibility entailed in this role and Area Custodians must be supported to manage their area's operation and direct any staff when an issue arises.

Are Business Units able to appoint additional staff to support the Area Custodian?

Yes. While the Area Custodian is the nominal role to act as the point of contact and coordination in managing the activities of an area, Business Units have the discretion to appoint supporting roles where this is suitable for their organisational structure. For example, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL), has implemented a tiered structure of 'Area', 'Suite' and 'Workspace' Custodians to provide broad oversight across the facility. When this type of model is implemented, the role requirements and expectations must be clearly defined.

What should we do if no candidates are available to take on an Area Custodian role?

Every effort should be made to appoint an Area Custodian to any area where equipment or material requires oversight to manage a health and safety risk and the efficient operation of the area.

If no candidates are willing and available to undertake the Area Custodian role, Team and Group Leaders should coordinate with staff in the area to identify what tasks would be overseen by the Custodian and ensure these are all appropriately delegated and undertaken.

Inducting Area Custodians into the role

What are the first steps for a newly appointed Area Custodian?

A new Area Custodian should:

1. Complete the online training for Area Custodians.
2. Update their corporate citizenship status in SAP (see [here](#) for information on how to do this).
3. Update their Annual Performance Agreement to include objectives for their role.
4. Work with their Line Manager and local HSE Advisor to apply the following processes to their area:
 - a. Risk management (including the preparation of [Safe Work Instructions](#) and [Area Hazard Posters](#))
 - b. [Area inductions including all relevant HSE elements](#)
 - c. [Housekeeping requirements](#)
 - d. [Plant and equipment management](#)
 - e. [Radiation](#), [chemical](#) and/or [biological](#) material management (where relevant in their area)
5. Identify any gaps in their knowledge where further training may be required.
6. Ensure they are aware of their local safety contacts (including Wardens, First Aid Officers, HSE Advisors, Health and Safety Representatives). Representatives, BU/site RSO, BU/site Chemical and Biological officers).

General guidance for Area Custodians

Is an Area Custodian expected to maintain everything in their area by themselves?

No. Area Custodians are responsible for understanding how to manage their work area safely, and have the authority to prevent other persons in their area from undertaking work that they believe to be unsafe or not compliant with agreed instructions, policies or procedures for that area.

Area Custodians can delegate tasks where appropriate, and should ensure there are clear rules for anyone using equipment, consumables or material in their area (for example, updating inventories, receiving training or re-ordering supplies).

What HSE documents are available?

Area Custodians should be aware of the [HSE risk management templates](#), which include:

- [Activity Risk Assessments](#)
- [Plant Risk Assessments](#)
- [Safe Work Instructions \(SWIs\)](#)
- [Area Hazard Posters](#) (these must be posted at the entrance to any medium/high risk areas and include the contact details for the Area Custodian(s))

Further information on when and how to complete these documents is available in the [HSE Risk Management Procedure](#), though Area Custodians may always contact their local HSE Advisor for more specific advice.

When completing or encouraging a risk assessment or SWI completion, be aware of the centralised [Risk Management Documentation Storage Sharepoint](#). This will provide an overview of any HSE risk

management documents that have already been developed. Area Custodians should encourage staff to upload any new documents to this Sharepoint page.

A hard copy of an SWI must also be kept as near as possible to the task or piece of equipment or area to which it refers.

[Are Area Custodians expected to provide inductions to new staff working in their area?](#)

Not directly, but in support to the Line Manager of the new staff member. Line managers are responsible for providing inductions to their staff, though they may seek guidance or request participation from Area Custodians when providing an induction. Similarly, the Line Manager is responsible for ensuring their staff are appropriately trained and capable of performing their role.

Line managers must ensure that staff working in a new area are introduced to the Area Custodian(s), if applicable.

[What should an Area Custodian do if there is a HSE incident in their area?](#)

Area Custodians must be informed if there is a HSE incident in their area as soon as possible by either the individual involved in the incident or the investigating Line Manager. While the Line Manager of the person involved in the incident is responsible for investigating the incident and determining further action, though they may request information from the Area Custodian if it would assist in the investigation.

The Area Custodian must be consulted before any significant changes are made to their area, such as installing, modifying or removing equipment, as a result of corrective actions arising from an incident investigation, or a new research activity is undertaken that is different to that established under exiting SWIs for the area.

If an individual suffers an injury that may affect their ability to perform their work safely, it is their Line Manager's responsibility (with assistance from HSE staff) to determine reasonable adjustments to their tasks and support ongoing work. Area Custodians should be notified when making reasonable adjustments to a work area.

[How are Area Custodians expected to resolve issues if HSE practices aren't being followed?](#)

Area Custodians are authorised to speak to individuals who are not working safely or not in agreement with the areas instructions, policies and procedures and request that they modify their work practices and behaviours. The Area Custodian is permitted to immediately cease any work that they perceive to pose a risk to health, property or the environment and consider further action. This may include removing the individual from the area or limiting access to equipment and material until the issue is resolved.

If the Area Custodian is uncomfortable speaking directly to the individual, then the Area Custodian should escalate their concerns to the individual's Line Manager for further action. All managers are expected to allow Area Custodians to undertake their role without prejudice and with the respect of all staff.

The Area Custodian may also request the support of HSE staff and/or HSRs if their concerns are not being adequately addressed.

Are Area Custodians expected to be available in an emergency?

While Area Custodians must be notified if there is a HSE incident or emergency in their area, they are not expected to act as emergency responders or be available for contact outside of their standard work hours or while on leave.

Where there is particularly sensitive equipment or material in an area that may require immediate attention in an abnormal situation or emergency (for example, a power failure of freezers storing research samples), response procedures should be discussed with all staff in the area and solely rely on the Area Custodian.

How should we prepare for an Area Custodian to go on leave?

It is recommended that, where possible, a back-up Area Custodian should be appointed and briefed on the requirements of the area to ensure coverage during periods of absence.

Area Custodians should also inform staff in their area (and any relevant Team /Group Leaders) of any planned leave and discuss any tasks that may need attention during their absence.

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Finishing in the role

What are the steps for when an Area Custodian finishes in the role?

Group and Team leaders must be aware of when an Area Custodian's term is finishing, and seek to appoint a new Area Custodian as soon as possible. Time permitting, the current Custodian should provide a handover to the new Custodian (see attached links for *a template handover checklist*).

Area Custodians finishing in their role should also update their corporate citizenship status to reflect this change. See [here](#) for further instructions on updating your status in SAP.

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