

VOLATILE SUBSTANCE USE (VSU) FRONTLINE WORKERS

Practical tips for responding to VSU safely and effectively

🚩 Recognising VSU

- Strong chemical smell (petrol, aerosols, glue, paint)
- Stains on face, hands, or clothing
- Red or watery eyes, runny nose, slurred speech
- Drowsiness, confusion, unsteady movements
- Empty aerosol cans/package nearby

⚠️ Immediate Safety First

- Do not panic or chase – this can escalate risk
- Ensure your safety first – avoid enclosed spaces with fumes
- Approach calmly, speak softly, keep body language non-threatening
- If aggressive or unwell → call 000
- If unconscious → place in recovery position, keep airway open, call ambulance

🧑🧑 Engaging with the Person

- ✓ Be calm, respectful, and non-judgmental
- ✓ Avoid shaming language (e.g. “sniffer”)
- ✓ Use short, simple sentences
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions: > “How are you feeling right now?” “Is there someone I can call to support you?”

🛑 What Not To Do

- ✗ Don't physically restrain unless safety is at risk
- ✗ Don't use aggressive confrontation
- ✗ Don't transport in a confined vehicle if still inhaling fumes

Harm Reduction Strategies

- Encourage use in well-ventilated areas if use continues
- Provide information about health risks (brain, heart, lungs)
- Suggest safer coping alternatives (sport, art, safe hang-out spaces)
- Connect to health checks if frequent use suspected

If You're a Retailer or Community Worker

- Document incidents (time, place, product)
- Share through the upcoming Amity VSU Reporting Platform
- Secure products (aerosols, glues, sanitisers) where possible
- Contact Amity for resources, training, or advice

Referral Pathways

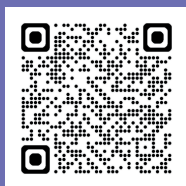
- Amity Counselling Service
- Danila Dilba Health Service
- Headspace Darwin/Palmerston
- NT Health / VSA Team – if relevant

Encourage self-referral or offer to make a warm referral together.

Emergency

- If in doubt: - Call 000 - State clearly: "suspected volatile substance use" so responders are prepared

Quick Rule of Thumb: Stay calm. Keep safe. Show care. Connect to help.



Amity
Community Services Inc

www.amity.org.au | 8944 6565