

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Working From Home during COVID-19

Tasmanian State Service employees are critical to supporting essential government and community services. The health and wellbeing of our employees is our highest priority.

Given the speed of change, it is possible that Government will require many of us to work differently or in changed roles to continue to support these vital essential services, and to ensure we are providing the supports our community needs. Wherever possible State Service employees should work from home. We will support employees to transition to working from home arrangements as far as practicable, remembering that there are some employees that will need to continue working from the office or their worksite.

This infosheet provides information to support questions that may arise with regard to this matter.

Introduction

The health and wellbeing of our employees is our highest priority. Wherever possible during COVID-19, State Service employees should work from home. We will support employees to transition to working from home arrangements as far as practicable, remembering that there are some employees that will need to continue working from the office or their worksite due to the nature of their role. For employees that do remain in the office or on their worksite, workplaces will continue to highlight the importance of social distancing and high personal hygiene standards which are vital to protect against the spread of infection.

Working from Home

In line with operational requirements managers will work with their teams to enable working from home arrangements in accordance with any existing agency policy or procedure, noting that some increased flexibility may be required in these circumstances.

Where required, due to the nature of the role, managers should consider whether they can make reasonable adjustments to the employee's position, having regard to operational requirements and the suitability of the work to enable a working from home arrangement. Any working from home arrangement must be approved by the agency, again with the understanding that in some circumstances flexibility may be required with regard to the way in which arrangements and approvals are progressed. It is noted that a number of agencies have implemented new processes associated with this, in response to COVID-19.

It is recognised that not all employees will be able to work from home due to the nature of their duties however it is important to remember that arrangements have been put in place in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our employees who are attending their usual place of work, and we will continue to work together to meet the needs of our workforce and our clients.

It is encouraged that employees discuss any concerns they may have about the risks in the workplace with their manager.

When dealing with such concerns, it is important to understand that some employees may hold genuine concerns for their own health and safety and these concerns must be discussed and mitigated. Responses may include providing information, counselling, alternative work arrangements, flexible working arrangements and access to leave. Employees should be made aware of the Employee Assistance Program.

Safety when Working from Home

Work health & safety considerations should be taken into account when assessing the possibility of an employee working from home. Agencies already consider this as part of their established working from home processes. Employees also have a duty of care to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and this includes when working from home. Any concerns about the safety of a home working environment should be raised by the employee and considered by their manager. Each agency has a duty of care to do all that is reasonably practicable to provide a safe workplace and should be satisfied that the home working environment is suitable. Tools to support both managers and employees in this scenario have been developed and are available [here](#) and must be read in conjunction with any agency policy by employees and managers.

Prioritisation of Arrangements

Vulnerable employees will have access to working from home arrangements as a priority (see [information guide](#)). Managers will provide proactive and meaningful support to these employees and facilitate the prioritisation of their transition to working from home arrangements.

It is also acknowledged that agencies will have different capacity regarding the availability of devices and technology to support working from home. Agencies will be considering these factors in line with business priorities and continuity while working through different processes around allocation (e.g. giving priority to essential services). This may impact on the ability of agencies and employees to implement working from home arrangements in certain circumstances or for particular employees. Agencies and employees are encouraged to work through such issues collaboratively, while maintaining priority business activities noting that the workplace is safe for employees to remain at work, particularly where social distancing can be managed.

Support

Employees are encouraged to discuss concerns with their manager in the first instance. Employees are also reminded of the Employee Assistance Program, and are encouraged to utilise this when required.

More Information

- [Employment Arrangements Guide](#)
- Your agency policy or materials supporting working from home