COVID-19
RETURN TO WORK STRATEGY
SECTION ONE: Planning and Preparation

This "Return to Work Strategy" should be a work in progress document that will allow you to identify what you need to do before bringing your team back to the workplace. Whilst it is not an exhaustive list, it will provide a solid framework for you to build a workable plan.

For further information or to discuss the plan for your business, please reach out to Skildare on 02 4940 8743.

Yours Sincerely,

Diane

Diane Loong
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Undertake a Risk Assessment – for Return to Work (RTW)

Framework

You must talk to your employees to understand their concerns and work together to ensure your workplace is COVIDSafe. It will also be important that you continue to plan and adapt as circumstances change, so make sure you stay up to date with current advice and guidelines. WHS obligations must still be met in full by employers throughout this time.

It's important you carefully review the guidance on the SafeWork Australia website to understand your obligations and ensure your business is properly prepared. What needs to be done to meet your work health and safety obligations will depend on your business's individual circumstances – these will have changed because of COVID-19.

The first step in preparing your business for operating in the COVID-19 environment is to understand how your WHS risks have changed. This is why it's critical your business completes a risk assessment and follows guidance from Safe Work Australia. Safe Work Australia's risk assessment guidance will help you identify how your business needs to prepare. You will need to know the current restrictions and how they apply to your business. You can also use this information to update your existing risk assessment plan for COVID-19 risks.

Identify the risks

The following link will bring you to Safe Work Australia where you can download a guide for undertaking a risk assessment for COVID-19. Click link here.

Identify risks associated with returning employees to the workplace, include the following, as a start:

The government has stated that it is ideal that employees continue to work from home wherever possible, consideration should therefore be given to the timing and necessity of retuning employees (at this time), and the manner in how you execute their return. Things that will need to be answered include:

- Can you maintain social distancing in your workplace? If so, for how many employees, customers, contractors, visitors can be allowed within the workplace at any one time?
- How might you manage the flow of employees into your workplace(s) especially if they need to use a lift?
- Do you have the appropriate PPE and hygiene supplies to maintain a safe workplace?

Where each risk is identified, determine an applicable control measure to mitigate or minimise the risk to a reasonably acceptable level.

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

Commence Consultation

Framework

Consultation is a critical part of the RTW plan. Consultation is a legal requirement under WHS laws and given WHS are some of the most pressing matters in your RTW plan, consultation will play a significant role in the success of transitioning your employees back to the workplace.

Transition Process

During your team meetings (i.e. zoom, Teams etc.), discuss the intended transition dates for return and outline, in broad terms, how you might transition the team back to the workplace. This is really an opportunity to get your employees focused on a RTW in line with WHS compliance, their specific circumstances and the needs of the business. You could initially discuss the following:

- A plan for a staggered RTW, i.e. Team A, Team B approach as detailed on page 6.
- Call for nominations or appoint a COVID-19 Officer per location as part of your ongoing consultation strategy.
- Ask each Manager/Supervisor to open discussions with their direct reports individually regarding the transition back to the workplace to determine any potential barriers in the short term e.g. vulnerable/high-risk employees, those with carer's responsibilities etc.
- Indicate that a draft roster will be circulated following consultation.
- Provide employees with an avenue to ask questions, provide input/ideas or raise concerns.

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

RTW Plan - Determine your Workforce numbers

Framework

Key things to remember as you ramp up your business during and after the COVID-19 pandemic are:

1. *Maintain good hygiene practices*

2. *Stay physically distant*

3. *Follow government advice*

Distancing Guidelines

It is important that distancing is maintained, even in the workplace. Ensure that the following is included in your plan:

- The size of the premise(s) has to allow for at least 4m^2 of space per person.
- Everyone has to maintain at least 1.5 metres distance from each other.
- Based on these rules, determine maximum capacity of each workplace location and, if applicable, allow for additional numbers to include, customers, visitors, deliveries etc.
- Map out what workstations will be utilised, adhering to the 4 m^2 per person and the 1.5-meter social distancing rules.

Refer to Safe Work "Physical Distancing Checklist. Click link here.

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

RTW Plan - Update Policies

Flexible Work Arrangements

Update Policy documents to include relevant components of your RTW strategy and control measures outlined in your risk assessment. For example:

- Flexible Working Arrangements Policy. Given the anticipated increase in requests for flexibility, a well-developed policy will provide consistent and transparent guidelines for managers and employees to follow and understand.
- WHS to include PPE, hygiene, housekeeping etc.

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

RTW Plan - Draft a Gradual Return to Work Roster

Roster Planning Framework

Consider including the following elements in your revise roster framework:

- Consider a staggered return for each location i.e., an A and B team (each working alternate days or roster arrangements). There may need to be additional teams (i.e. Team C, D etc.) depending on the workplace, size, capacity and staff numbers.
- Roster start and finish times, including lunch breaks to separate employees wherever possible.
- Consider access to your building(s) at the start and finish of the day and how you can maintain distancing e.g. elevator capacities.
- Determine a commencement date for your RTW roster.
- Consider employees that may:
    - Have children still requiring home-schooling.
    - Have underlying health conditions, may be vulnerable due to their age, or have a family member that is vulnerable and therefore may require working from home longer.
    - Use public transport to come to work.
- Consider - Are there any employees that have been more productive at home throughout the COVID-19 pandemic? Do you wish to approach them directly about an ongoing working from home arrangement?

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

Consultation/Discussions with team

Team Communication

Once you have 'some meat on the bones' for your RTW plan, continue with consultation and circulate your overarching RTW plans with your team(s) around the anticipated dates of return and the safety strategies that will be undertaken as part of the work you completed in your Risk Assessment.

Allow staff to ask questions, raise concerns and provide feedback regarding the proposed process and strategies. You will get some great ideas that you may not have considered. Don't forget your team members may know the workplace (or parts of it) better than you!

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

Consider feedback

Working with your team

- Consider and where appropriate implement this feedback in your ongoing strategy before finalising.
- Consider requests for Flexible Working Arrangements in line with your Policy and Fair Work Act requirements.
    - Are the agreed arrangements temporary or permanent and ongoing?
    - Document the arrangements.
- Make adjustments to the roster as required.
- Communicate the final roster to the team.

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

COVID-19
RETURN TO WORK STRATEGY
SECTION TWO: Implementation

Appoint a COVID-19 Officer for each location.

One single contact for your business

- Allow time for the COVID-19 Officer to fulfil responsibilities within their working week.
- Ensure their responsibilities are documented and communicated to them, e.g. responsibilities may include:
    - Placing signage within the workspaces, bathrooms and at entry points.
    - Liaising with other tenants (and/or landlord) in your building to coordinate the use of lifts, amenities, public spaces etc.
    - Ensure cleaning products are stocked, (hand sanitiser, surface sprays, hand wash etc.).
    - Identify high traffic areas to be cleaned multiple times a day e.g. door handles, lift buttons, reception desk etc.
    - Determine what areas will be required to be cleaned at the end of each day.
    - Ensure employees clean personal property as it enters the workplace, laptops, umbrellas, phones etc.
    - Identify risks with social distancing and managing ongoing adherence to these principles – e.g. meeting rooms and duration of meetings, customer liaisons, kitchen usage etc.

Refer to SafeWork Checklists

Cleaning

How to clean and disinfect the workplace.

Health, Hygiene and Facilities Checklist

Signage and Posters

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

Positive COVID-19 Case

Define the process

Ensure Management Team are familiar with the process for a positive COVID-19 case within the workplace.

Refer to SafeWork Checklist

COVID-19 at the Workplace

Work, Health and Safety Incident Notification

Ensure you have a mechanism to quickly identify employees who have had contact with an individual who has tested positive to COVID-19.

Action Items

Action Item	Complete

Weekly Review

Regular team catchups

Conduct a weekly review meeting with Management and the COVID-19 Officers (sooner if a hazard or new risk is identified) and determine:

- Is the plan working?
- Are the business operational requirements being achieved?
    - If no, can we safely make any adjustments to the roster to help achieve objectives?
- Has the government updated their advice?
    - If yes, can we review the roster and internal practices to further relax restrictions?

Action Items

Action Item	Complete