Coronavirus (COVID-19) employer factsheet

All employers should be aware of the risks of COVID-19 to better protect their employees' health while also maintaining normal business operations. This means working with your staff to develop a plan for how you can all minimise the spread of the virus.

Employers can take the following steps:

Manage sick leave

- Encourage employees who are sick to stay home.

- Ensure that employees are aware of sick leave policies. Sick leave policies should be flexible, including whether medical certificates need to be supplied, and consistent with public health guidance. This also includes employees who are required to stay home to care for sick family members.

- Maintain flexible policies for employees if they need to work from home.

- Should an employee appear unwell with flu-like symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath), separate them from other employees and immediately send them home.

> **COVID-19 may cause disruption to business or services creating frustration with customers. Encourage your employees to remain calm if this occurs.**

Protect your workplace

- Place posters (see resources) that encourage employees:

  ○ to stay at home if they are unwell

  ○ know what to do if you cough or sneeze (it is recommended people sneeze and cough into their flexed elbow, or tissues which can be immediately thrown into a sealed bin. Wash hands immediately after)

  ○ responsible hand hygiene.

- Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to wash their hands with soap and water (it is recommended people wash their hands for 20 seconds and then completely dry).

- Provide gloves, alcohol-based hand sanitiser and hand wipes throughout the workplace. Make sure there are adequate supplies.

- Routinely clean the workplace, particularly all frequently touched surfaces.

- Provide disposable alcohol-based wet wipes for employees to clean frequently touched surfaces

- Reconsider all unnecessary travel.

- Advise employees to consult with smartraveller.gov.au before any international travel.

Supporting your employees

- It is normal for your employees to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or even angry during times like these.

- If your employee feels overwhelmed, encourage them to use coping strategies they have previously used in times of stress, such as:

  ◦ Stay in touch with family members and/or friends

  ◦ seeking professional help

  ◦ accessing one of the services listed in the resources section.

> Employees may be reluctant to take time off work for various reasons and may feel guilty for doing so. Acknowledge how the employee is feeling but strongly encourage them to stay home.

Be prepared and have a business response plan

- Consider and have a plan on how to reduce the spread and severity of COVID-19.

- Have a plan for how your business will follow the guidance of government health authorities in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in your workplace.

- Communicate this plan with employees.

Consider:

- How you might manage employees who are vulnerable and at higher risk for contracting COVID-19 (e.g. older employees, those who already have a chronic illness).

- The impact of increased employee absenteeism on others in your workplace.

- Training employees to perform a variety of duties in case of increased absenteeism.

- Changing your business practices if required to continue critical operations.

- Promoting flexible working arrangements e.g. working from home.

Stay up-to-date with the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak by regularly checking the websites in the resource box. Most people who become infected experience mild illness and recover. For some it might become more severe.

For latest advice, information or resources access:

- World Health Organisation www.who.int

- Australian Department of Health: www.health.gov.au

- National Coronavirus Health Information Line: 1800 020 080 (for translating or interpreting services: 131 450)

- Healthdirect hotline: 1800 022 222 www.healthdirect.gov.au

- NSW Department of Health: 1300 066 055 www.health.nsw.gov.au

- For concerns about your health, phone a GP

- Smartraveller.gov.au

- Lifeline: 131114

- Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

- MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978

- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

- Headspace: 1800 650 890