

Impact of COVID-19 on how we work

A checklist for employees

Many people may find themselves working flexibly during the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that were not available previously. You may need to discuss flexible work arrangements other than working from home to balance your work and personal responsibilities right now. Or you may want to continue some of the flexible work arrangements when workplaces reopen, or discuss options other than working from home.

This resource will help you think about COVID-19 related issues when planning a discussion about flexible work arrangements with your manager. It provides you with tips to prepare a strong and well-considered request and is designed to be used together with the [flexible work request planner](#).

The planner chats with you to provide information on your rights and to help you plan for a discussion about flexible work with your manager. The following COVID-19 related issues may also be relevant for your discussion, so select the options that you would like to include in your request, based on your situation.

COVID-19 issues	Details to consider when planning your request
☐ Flexible work is not just 'working from home'	Working flexibly is about having autonomy over how and when you work. Examples of flexible work might be adjusting your starting and finishing times, the number of days or hours you work each week or fortnight, compressed hours or job sharing.
☐ Continuing flexibility after returning to work	Many workers have expressed interest in continuing some sort of flexible working arrangement post-COVID-19 and are now backed up with recent evidence about their productivity in doing so.
☐ Changing the stereotype	Work-from-home orders under COVID-19 have challenged stereotypes about who works flexibly and their reasons for doing so. Perceptions that flexible work is about women's caring responsibilities have changed: supporting all workers to contribute to their parenting or caring responsibilities is an important consideration for employers.
☐ Trusting remote workers	COVID-19 work-from-home orders have demonstrated to many employers how effectively their workforce is performing when working outside of their regular workplace, set-ups and routines. Employers have had to trust their employees to get the work done while working remotely. Having seen little impact on productivity, employers now have the opportunity to actively encourage and promote flexible working to all staff without impact to career progression.
☐ Ensuring health and wellbeing	Employers still have obligations as far as possible to provide a safe workplace, even when you're working remotely. Ensuring remote workers can address health and wellbeing will be important considerations for employers.

Helpful topics

When having discussions with your manager about your request to work flexibly it is important to:

- make an agreement about what needs to get done and by when, rather than focusing on the hours you spend in your workplace, or rigid start and finish times.
- look back through the examples you've built up about how flexibility is working to show how you'll continue to work effectively.
- consider how cultural acceptance on working remotely has shifted during the pandemic in many workplaces – towards redesigning roles based on outcomes achieved rather than the amount of time spent at work.
- discuss the benefits for both you and your workplace in continuing with any flexible working arrangements that you've already set up.
- ensure you don't delay the conversation by thinking that you need to prove your value before making the request.

“Don't think you have to provide your value first when you start a job and then later ask to work flexibly. It often means you will end up working five days but being paid for four.”

Kristen Hilton, Commissioner

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

The [flexible work request planner](#) will chat with you to help you develop a plan before you talk to your manager about your flexible work request.

Contact us

If you think you have been treated unfairly because of your request for flexible work, or that your request was unfairly refused, you can contact us for information or to make a complaint.

Enquiry Line 1300 292 153 or (03) 9032 3583

Get help humanrights.vic.gov.au/get-help