

Impact of COVID-19 on how we work

A quick guide for managers and employers

Many people may have been working flexibly during the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that were not available in the same way previously. Some staff may want to continue some of the flexible work arrangements as workplaces reopen or discuss flexibility arrangements other than working from home.

This checklist focuses on key COVID-19 related issues to consider when discussing a flexible work request with a member of your staff. We have designed it to be used with the [flexible work request planner](#) – which provides information about rights to flexible work and key points to consider when reviewing each request. There's momentum to explore with your team how they might work flexibly in a way that is effective both for them and the organisation. Here are some key topics to consider including when planning a discussion with your staff.

COVID-19 issues to consider when reviewing flexible work requests

☐ **There are many ways to work flexibly**

While conversations about 'working from home' may have become more familiar, flexible work comes down to having autonomy over how and when you and your staff work. Other examples of flexible work might be adjusted start or finish times, the number of days or hours worked each week or fortnight, compressed hours or job sharing.

Thinking ahead about the types of flexible work that staff can use within your business structure is a critical part of forecasting your resourcing needs, while supporting your employees' professional and personal responsibilities.

☐ **Continuing flexible work arrangements**

Many workers have expressed interest in continuing some sort of flexible working arrangement post-COVID-19 and are backed up with a recent 'trial period' about their productivity when working flexibly. Offering flexible work also brings the prospect of improved employee engagement and recruitment advantage.

When considering roles from the perspective of outcomes achieved, as part of your discussion you could look together at which types of tasks are better suited to working in person with other team members, and the tasks which can be performed effectively by working remotely.

□ **Challenging stereotypes on flexible work**

Work-from-home orders under COVID-19 demonstrated that long-held stereotypes about who works flexibly are changing. For example, it can be an important consideration for employers to support *all* workers to contribute to their parenting or caring responsibilities, or to consider how their 'work-life balance' is working – challenging the perception that flexible work is only about women's caring responsibilities.

□ **Send messages of trusting workers**

COVID-19 work-from-home orders have demonstrated to many employers how effectively their workforce performs outside of their regular workplace, set-ups and routines.

Trusting employees to get the work done while working remotely has seen little impact on employee productivity, bringing the opportunity to actively encourage and promote flexible working to all staff without penalty to career progression. Another positive message to send to staff is how your workplace values the agility and responsiveness in how employees have managed shifts to flexible work, and that working flexibly is actively supported by the senior management team.

□ **Ensuring health and wellbeing**

Employers still have obligations as far as possible to provide a safe workplace, even with staff working remotely. Ensuring remote workers can address their health and wellbeing is important, as is strengthening support in the workplace as some employees transition back.

A conversation with each staff member will help you determine the types of support needed to support a transition back to the workplace, and how your staff may be affected in terms of balancing their work and family commitments, commute times, costs and encouraging self-care.

Tips for your conversation

- ✓ A useful mindset is to look at making an agreement together about what needs to get done and by when, rather than focusing on the hours spent in the workplace, or rigid start and finish times.
- ✓ Refer to the [planner](#) to recap protections in state and federal law that apply to flexible work requests, as part of your risk management strategy in preventing discrimination from happening in your workplace.

Further resources

- **Get in touch with the Commission**
[Resources to help you meet your obligations as an employer](#)
Contact us on 1300 292 153 or enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au
- **Safe Work Australia**
[National COVID-19 safe workplace principles](#)
- **WorkSafe**
[Creating safe workplaces in your industry](#)
- **Beyond Blue**
[Mental wellbeing support](#)