HIA guide for a COVID-19 safe workplace

As you begin to return to work in your usual workplace, such as the office, sales or showroom, it will be critical that your business continues to be proactive and diligent in complying with the COVID-19 health and hygiene requirements.

There are many things you can do to help protect your staff from the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

HIA has developed this Guide to assist you in implementing a COVID-19 safe workplace and supporting your staff as they begin to return to work.

1 Establish a shared understanding of the rules and good practices and actions plan the business has in place to support staff by:

- Regularly communicating with all staff to update them on the latest Government requirements.
- Implementing a return to work induction process for employees which sets out the risks and measures put in place to manage COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Encouraging staff to ask questions and share any safety concerns they have.
- Working together to identify solutions for each aspect of COVID-19 safety in your workplace.
- Establishing processes to regularly monitor and review the implementation of COVID-19 health and hygiene requirements at your workplace including adopting any changes made by government health departments or safety regulators.

2 Ensure you have arrangements for managing an employee that becomes infected by:

- Developing an action plan which outlines:
  - how you will investigate and determine when the worker was last in the office and which staff they have been in contact with,
  - how staff will be notified that a staff member has attended work that has been identified with the virus,
  - how any areas in the workplace will be closed off for access until the area has been cleaned and disinfected,
  - how the areas impacted will be cleaned,
  - how and when remaining staff can return to the workplace.
- Making this action plan available to all staff.

3 Make it easy for your staff to practice physical distancing while in the office by:

- Implementing the one person per 4 square metre rule in open plan office spaces and common areas. Create floor or wall markings as a reminder if necessary.
- Restructuring the layout of the workplace to allow for physical distancing to ensure there is at least 1.5 metre between desks/office furniture. Create floor or wall markings as a reminder if necessary.
- Managing the number of employees in the office at any one time by:
  - Staggering start and finish times to reduce the number of people in the office,
  - Staggering break times to reduce the number of people in common areas at any one time,
  - Limiting the time staff spend in the office by combining working from home with time at the workplace or implementing other flexible work arrangements.

4 Make it easy for your staff to practice good hygiene and handwashing by:

- Ensuring access to washroom facilities with an adequate supply of soap, water and paper towel.
- Making hand sanitisers and other cleaning products available per person or per desk.
- Providing guidance on how to properly wash hands and other information on how to manage personal safety.
- Providing appropriate cleaning supplies for staff to clean their personal workspace.
- Training and encouraging staff to take regular breaks to exercise adequate cleaning practices throughout the day.

5 — Make practical arrangements for cleaning the workplace regularly and thoroughly by:

- Considering the need to **increase the usual cleaning schedule**.
- Avoiding the need for multiple employees to **share office equipment** such as stationary items, phones and printers.
- Where this is not practicable ensuring **staff have access to appropriate cleaning supplies** to clean shared equipment before and after each use.

6 — Make practical arrangements to monitor and manage the health of all staff by:

- Establishing a **register of staff work location** each week i.e. working from home or attending the workplace.
- Ensuring that staff do not attend the workplace if they have **COVID-19 symptoms** such as:
  - fever,
  - coughing,
  - a sore throat,
  - fatigue, and
  - shortness of breath.
- Ensuring staff members attending work that begin to display symptoms **leave the workplace immediately** – whether to work from home or to take appropriate leave entitlements.
- Ensuring anyone that has been in **close contact** with someone affected by COVID-19 does not enter the workplace until cleared by medical advice.
- Identifying any **vulnerable employees** and making alternative arrangements to support them to continue working without direct contact with others.

7 — Manage staff gatherings, meetings and training to reduce direct contact between staff by:

- **Postponing or cancelling** non-essential activities.
- If gatherings, meetings or training are essential using **indirect face-to-face options** e.g. digital platforms such as tele and video conferencing.
- If indirect options are not practical:
  - ensuring face-to-face meeting times are **limited to the essential time required**;
  - holding essential gatherings, meetings or training in spaces that enable workers to keep at least **1.5 metres apart** and with **4 square metres of space per person** – e.g. outdoors or in large rooms;
  - **limiting the number of attendees** in a gathering, meeting or training. This may require, for example, multiple training sessions to be held; and
  - ensuring **adequate ventilation** if held indoors.

8 — Limiting physical interactions between staff and non-essential persons by:

- Asking people such as family, friends and general visitors to **stay away from the workplace** unless access is essential.
- Talking to suppliers and delivery services about how to **safely manage deliveries** to the workplace, for example by using contactless delivery arrangements.
- Talking to other businesses in **shared premises** and that interact with your business (e.g. for visiting food vans and cleaners) about health and hygiene requirements including:
  - how to manage **shared areas** such as lifts, bathroom and kitchen facilities; and
  - what you will do if there is a **case, or suspected case, of COVID-19** at the premises.

9 — Take time to support your employee's mental health by:

- Speaking with staff who have been away from the workplace for weeks or months, and may be **feeling unsettled** in returning.
- Organising regular team time to allow staff to interact socially using digital platforms or appropriately managed in person options.

10 — Investigate and consider other useful information and resources including:

- **Safe Work Australia's online hub** which includes:
  - Printable resources for staff such as the **How to hand wash poster**.
  - **Useful information about cleaning** to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- The **National COVID-19 Coordination Commission resources** including a Planning tool to help businesses reopen and be COVIDSafe.
- **Mental health resources** such as My Business Health website and Beyondblue.

HIA also recommends members download the COVIDSafe app to assist staff to manage their own health and allow contact tracing should they come into contact with the virus.

Our priority is to keep our workers, our clients and our community safe.