

GUIDANCE ON RESTRICTIONS RISKS AND TRANSITIONS



As COVID-19 restrictions ease across Australia, many workers are transitioning back to usual workplaces depending on restrictions across each state and territory. Each jurisdiction has its own COVID-safe measures and requirements based on their public health situation and state and territory conditions.

Employers (persons conducting a business or undertaking, PCBU) must follow the current COVID-19 restrictions or easing of restriction roadmap in their relevant jurisdiction as they plan their transition and work to maintain a COVID-Safe workplace.

The diversity of working environments in the Comcare jurisdiction means a single approach to transition planning is not practical however, we have put together some general guidance for employers.



Transition plans

Each organisation's transition plan should ensure workers are physically and mentally supported and safe to return to their usual workplace. It should be tailored to meet relevant industry or geographic circumstances and respond to changing COVID-19 risks as restrictions ease over time.

Transition plans should also align with:

- [Department of Health](#) advice
- State and territory public health orders, directions and restrictions
- Emerging hazard identification
- National [COVID-19 Safe Workplace Principles](#).

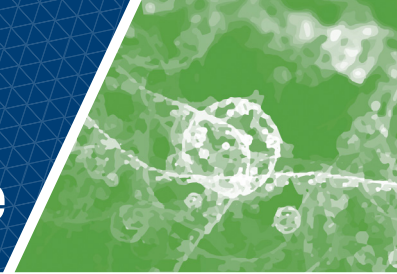


Risk assessments in an evolving environment—it's not a set and forget

- **Every workplace is different.** Identifying or controlling risks from COVID-19 is not a one-size-fits-all process.
- **Adaptive WHS systems.** Workplaces need systems that can adapt and respond to difference and changes in public health orders and restrictions across jurisdictions, and the unique risks within their workplaces, which need to be identified and managed. This includes managing psychological risk in the workplace.
- **Hazards and risks.** There is a critical need for effective hazard identification and risk management as employers respond to ongoing changes.
- **Identification and assessment.** Risks must be identified and assessed regularly and take into consideration any specific industry or geographical requirements or circumstances. You should consult with workers on hazards and risks.
- **Regular controls review.** All risk controls need to be regularly reviewed, particularly as restrictions change. Employers should familiarise themselves with restriction roadmaps in the relevant jurisdiction/s to assist with planning.
- **Public health advice.** Employers must keep abreast of public health advice to ensure they are prepared to respond to localised pandemic outbreaks.



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): Transitioning to usual workplaces as restrictions ease



Maintaining a COVID-safe workplace

Employers and workers should work together to:

- Observe physical distancing
- Maintain a cleaning regime
- Practise good personal hygiene
- Promote staying home if unwell
- Wear face masks where required by public health orders
- Implement and review COVID-safe plans
- Have a plan and actively identify and manage risks.

Employers must consult with workers and WHS representatives on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19, including control measures in the workplace.



Transitioning workers to the usual workplace

Importantly, employers should assess who can return to work, considering the circumstances of each worker and discussing how they might plan the transition. This may include any transitional arrangements based on:

- Identified vulnerabilities
- Caring responsibilities
- Worker concerns
- Equipment or preferences
- Organisational requirements.

Other considerations include continuing flexible working arrangements, ways to support physical distancing and business continuity at the usual workplace (e.g. staggered working hours, changes to meeting rooms), and adapting policies and procedures to the changing circumstances.

Employers should discuss with their workers options for returning to their usual workplace in the short-term and longer-term as businesses start to operate under a 'COVID-normal'. This includes potential ongoing remote or working from home arrangements for some industries.



Mental health and wellbeing

Emerging research has identified high levels of distress across Australia during COVID-19. Some people are struggling to deal with feelings of uncertainty, stress and anxiety. While others may be feeling apprehensive about going back to their usual workplace. For those that are back at their usual workplace, there may be mixed feelings about being away from home.

This is why it is vital to address worker mental health and wellbeing in transition plans, including the importance of maintaining regular contact with workers via phone, email or online.



For latest COVID-19 updates and current restrictions

- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Comcare's COVID-19 webpage](#)
- [Safe Work Australia's COVID-19 Information for workplaces webpage](#)
- ACT: [COVID-19](#)
- NSW: [COVID-19 | NSW Government](#)
- NT: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Qld: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | Health and wellbeing](#)
- SA: [SA.GOV.AU: COVID-19](#)
- TAS: [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- VIC: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Victoria](#)
- WA: [COVID-19 coronavirus](#)