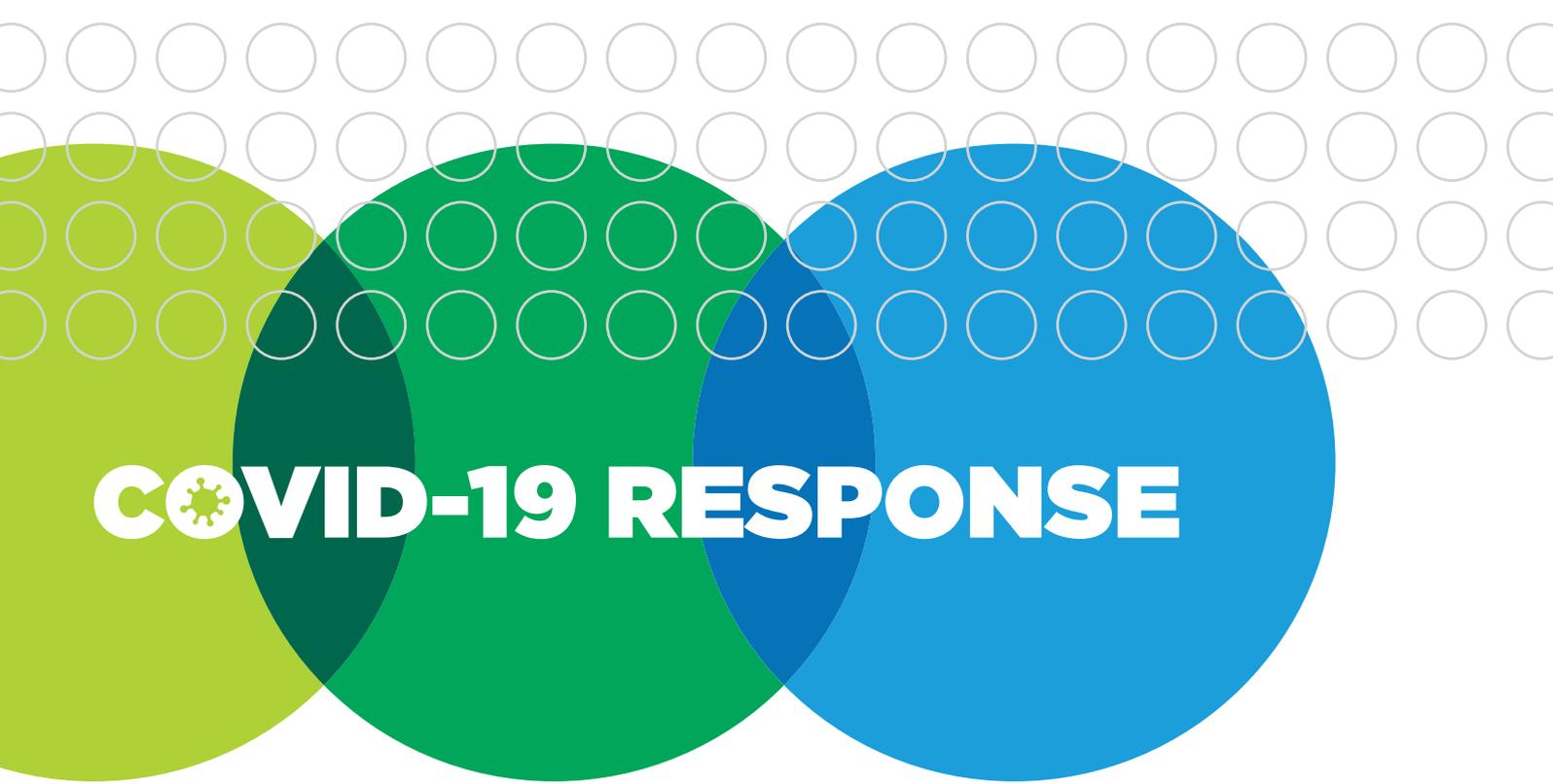# South Australian Public Sector COVID-19 Safe Workforce Return Toolkit

11 September 2020

COVID-19 RESPONSE

This toolkit has been prepared by the Office of
the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment
for guidance to Public Sector Agencies.
This toolkit should be read in conjunction
with Workforce Considerations advice.

Contents

This is a planning toolkit only – you should seek relevant advice from SafeWork Australia, SafeWork SA and Health Authorities to ensure you meet all of your legal obligations

Commissioner's Introduction

A significant focus for agencies is planning to return their employees to the workplace. This pandemic is far from over and it will be critically important to shift our focus to planning for a safe, efficient and effective return to the workplace. As we do so, we must ensure that we also plan to capitalise on some of the positive changes we have made which have resulted in greater outputs for our employees and the community. This will be a key focus for the coming weeks.

Every agency is unique, but we will be faced with the same challenges: where to begin; how we will keep our people and customers protected; how and when to communicate; and what's the right way to move forward.

This toolkit will support agencies in balancing elements of employee safety, well-being, engagement and productivity.

It starts by posing the questions we need to answer, and is coupled with some practical tools to identify your physical workplace risks, and how we can adapt the workforce to determine the optimal mix of wellbeing and productivity.

As we develop our return to the workplace plan, we must invest time in building workforce confidence and assuring our employees that we have the right controls in place to protect them, their families and the community.

We need to effectively engage our employees ahead of any transitions to assure them that we are placing their wellbeing at the forefront of decisions and re-emphasize how we will continue to do this as we change our advice as restrictions are lifted.

This toolkit will help your agency prepare a plan for the different stages of the pandemic. You should revise your plan frequently, particularly as restrictions and conditions change. The toolkit will help you work out what resources are available and where you can go for support.
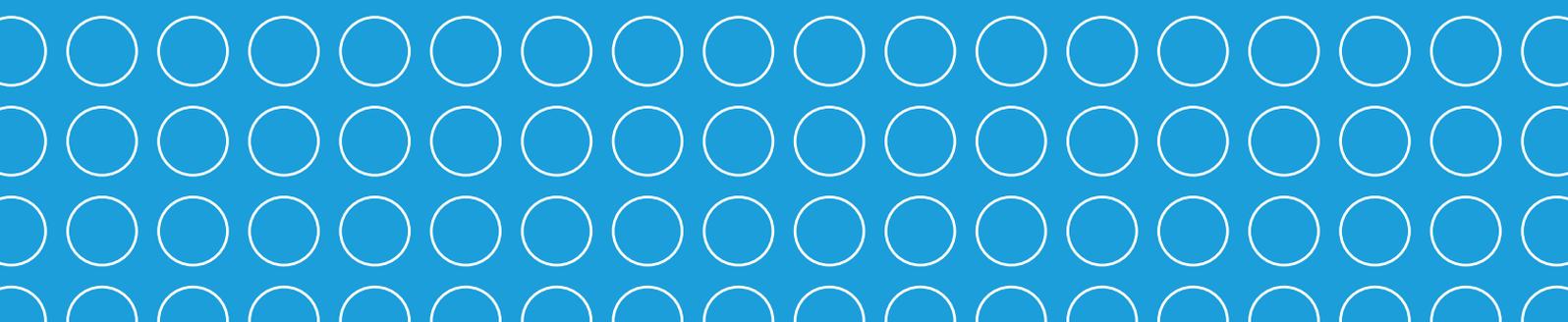
Employee Consultation

Agencies have a [duty to consult their employees on health and safety matters](#). Agencies must consult with all employees and their representatives (including elected Health and Safety Representatives (HSR's) before making any changes that may affect their health and safety

The [Commissioner for Public Sector Employment's Determination and Guideline: Employment Relations](#) sets out the legal obligations for consultation with unions and employees.

Awards and enterprise agreements that apply to public sector employment also contain various consultation provisions. Aside from any legal obligation, consultation helps build awareness and commitment as well as contributing to positive working relationships.

It is important that agencies identify the areas that employees require consultation, and develop a communications plan.

Things you need to know

All Australian Governments have agreed to a set of [National COVID-19 Safe Work Principles](#) to guide us and ensure that our workplaces are healthy and safe.

National Cabinet agreed that [Safe Work Australia](#) is the single source of information for workplace health and safety advice.

Review the [SafeWork SA](#) site for specific guidance for South Australia.

We continue to be guided by the [Government of South Australia health advice](#) for important information in relation to COVID-19.

Our advice is underpinned by the South Australian Public Sector COVID-19 Protocols.

We encourage you to download the [COVIDSafe app](#) and help protect yourself, your friends and your family.

We encourage you to continue to monitor and share this guidance as it develops.

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SECTION 1
Preparing a COVID-19 Safe Workplace

Considerations

This toolkit provides a structured approach for on-site response teams to develop a plan to respond to the following questions:

- What guidelines will you need to put in place for physical distancing for key workplace interactions (internal and with customers)?

- Will the office need to be reconfigured?

- Are your facilities set up to minimise virus transmission? (E.g. soap dispensers, toilets, contact-free food delivery, break area cleanliness)

- Will PPE be required? Do you have enough supplies, or can you access supplies if needed?

- How will your current cleaning need to change?

- If employees have been sick, what standards will you require for them to be able to return to the workplace?

- What is your response plan for COVID-19 positive employees or a COVID-19 exposure?

- Does your communication strategy encourage employees to stay home if they have symptoms?

- How will you encourage mental health support networks for employees who may need to access these services?

- Reduce the amount of hot desk arrangements and sharing of common workspaces. If these arrangements cannot be changed, frequent cleaning must be a shared responsibility of facilities and employees.

1.1 Where to start – establish an on-site response team

Considerations

The first thing we suggest is establishing a cross functional on-site response team that is able to execute the South Australian Public Sector COVID-19 Protocols in the workplace and manage all considerations for returning to the workplace. Agencies should consider re-purposing their business continuity teams that managed pre and during COVID-19.

An Executive should be the agency's Project Sponsor. The Executive should identify each location's on-site manager. Some agencies will have multiple on-site managers due to various physical work sites.

All key areas of this transition plan should have at least one lead. For critical roles, such as the on-site manager, consider appointing a backup who is ready to assume all responsibilities if the lead becomes incapacitated. For larger locations, key areas (floors, buildings, etc.) consider having a small team managed by the lead.

Given the coordination needed, the on-site response team should meet daily at a minimum. For larger locations, consider including the floor/building leads in these meetings.

Outline all roles and responsibilities. Certain agencies such as Health, Education and other customer facing agencies may need additional facilities roles to ensure safety protocols are also implemented for the community.

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Practical Tools — Roles and Responsibilities Chart

(for smaller agencies a number of these roles may be combined)

Role	Lead	Backup Lead (if needed)	Responsibilities
Executive Project Sponsor (SAES or equivalent)			• Direction for on-site managers aligned to South Australian Public Sector COVID-19 Protocols. • Reporting to Chief Executives on issues and risks. • Executing mitigation strategies for identified risks. • Ensuring the agency is operating in line with the Government of South Australia health advice. • Implementing a communication strategy for the workforce (including on-site and remote employees).
On-Site Manager (Corporate various locations and on-site various locations such as schools, hospitals etc.)			• Manage the local reopening and on-site team. • Work with Executive (Project Sponsor) to ensure proper on-site practices, escalate any issues, and provide updates. • Communicate with other relevant worksite stakeholders (e.g. building management, DPTI).
Workplace Safety Representative			• Manage the disinfection and cleaning staff. • Maintain an adequate supply of personal protective equipment and disinfectant materials. • Ensure physical distancing protocols are followed, especially in high-touch areas and common spaces.
Health and Wellbeing Representative			• Decide if any additional local physical and mental health support is needed. • Manage the screening procedures for employees and visitors.
Training and Communications Representative			• Lead training for managers and employees. • Send out email and video communications to on-site and remote workers. • Maintain on-site signage.
Agency Mobility Contacts			• Responsible for working with Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment for mobilising the South Australian Public Sector workforce.
[Insert Other Key Roles as Needed]			

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Before commencing your plan, it's important the on-site response team carefully reviews the guidance on the Safe Work Australia website to understand your agency's obligations and to ensure your agency is properly prepared. Actions that need to be implemented to meet your work health and safety obligations will depend on your agency's individual circumstances. Your circumstances would have changed because of COVID-19.

Safe Work Australia has developed an online hub with information on how to minimise the risk of COVID-19 exposure in your workplace.

The hub is updated regularly and contains information on how to minimise the risk of COVID-19 exposure in your workplace.

1.2 Understanding your risks

Considerations

The first step in preparing your workplace is to understand how your WHS risks have changed. It's critical that your agency completes a risk assessment and follows guidance from Safe Work Australia. Safe Work Australia's risk assessment guidance will help you identify how your agency needs to prepare. You will need to know the current restrictions and how they apply to your agency. You can also use this information to update your existing risk assessment plan to include COVID-19 risks.

Practical tools — Checklist

Step	Task	Completed on (date)
1	Read through the Safe Work Australia advice on how to undertake a risk assessment.	
2	Read how to keep workers safe and limit the spread of COVID-19.	
3	Complete or update your agencies risk assessment in line with advice from health authorities and South Australian Governments direction regarding restrictions. Review and update it regularly to make sure that you keep on top of new risks that may emerge.	(Regular checks required)

Keep checking in with your employees, as they will know potential risks that may exist as well as potential mitigation strategies.

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1.3 Make sure your workplace is safe and clean

Considerations

Review your agency's current hygiene and cleaning practices.

- Are there enough supplies?
- Are frequently used areas cleaned regularly?

- Do we need to increase our cleaning services?
- What additional cleaning will our employees be responsible for?

Practical tools — Checklist

Step	Task	Completed on (date)
1	Complete the Safe Work Australia Cleaning Checklist	
2	Complete the Safe Work Australia health, hygiene and facilities checklist	
3	Print signs and posters on good hygiene and facilities check list	
4	Inform you employees about how to maintain good hygiene and cleaning	

Health and Safety Action Plan

Once you complete these tasks, write down what your business needs to do:

What do you need to do?	How will you do this?	When will it happen?	What supplies are required?
e.g. set up alcohol-based hand sanitiser stations at entry and exit points	e.g. ask cleaners to refill stations	e.g. ensure the stations are checked every 2 hours	e.g. 1L/week of alcohol based hand sanitiser and 2 dispensers

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1.4 Staying physically distant
Considerations

From Monday 29 June, restrictions were eased in South Australia with the introduction of a 1 person per 2 square metres density rule. While there is a reduced density rule, there is still a requirement for employees to meet physical distancing of 1.5 metres apart. It is essential that your workplace meets these requirements, where possible. Consideration should be given to the following recommendation:

- Staggering employees start and finish times to avoid crowding in the office and on public transport for the commute in and out of the workplace.

- Implement a one-way system to commute around the workplace.

- Closing lunch-rooms or staggering lunch and break times. Consider distancing for shared facilities e.g. lifts, bathrooms when planning for the number you can physically accommodate.

- Removing chairs from conference rooms to limit attendance at meetings and ensure employees can sit at least 1.5 metres (2 square metres) apart.

- Leaving a buffer between scheduled meetings in conference or meeting rooms to avoid overlap between two groups and to allow time for cleaning.

- Installing physical distancing decals on the floors of any shared spaces in the workplace.

- Where possible, encourage maximum use of virtual collaboration.

- To the extent possible, restructuring open floor layouts to ensure that employees can sit at least 1.5 metres (2 square metres) from each other.

- Installing barriers in reception areas, or between customers and employees that can be easily cleaned and are high enough to prevent contact.

- Delivering products through curb side pick-up or delivery.

- Regularly communicating physical distancing reminders throughout the workplace, including compliance with South Australian Public Sector COVID-19 Protocols.

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Practical tools — Checklist

Step	Task	Completed on (date)
1	Review the Safe Work Australia advice on physical distancing	
2	Complete the Physical Distancing Checklist	
3	Print signs and posters on how to ensure physical distancing	
4	Talk to your employees about how to stay physically distant and safe.	

Physical Distancing Action Plan

What do you need to do?	How will you do this?	When will it happen?	What supplies are required?
e.g. provide physical distancing markers on the floor where appropriate	e.g. speak to employees about where customers tend to queue	e.g. discuss at next staff meeting	e.g. markers to stick to the floor
e.g. Staff to return in waves due to comply with physical distancing	e.g. Create roster of staff to rotate in the workplace and remote working	e.g. One week ahead of stage 2 of restrictions easing	e.g. Workstation cleaning facilities

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1.5 Adapting your transition plan to your service delivery

Considerations

Think about your agency's unique service delivery. What are the additional steps you need to take to keep everyone safe? How will you communicate with your customers, community, employees and suppliers?

Practical Tools — Checklist

Step	Task	Completed on (date)
1	Review Safe Work Australia industry specific information	(Regular checks required)
2	Complete the what can I do to keep my workers safe at the workplace and limit the spread of COVID-19 checklist	
3	Review the South Australian public health directions that apply to your agency	(Regular checks required)
4	Talk to your employees about changes specific to your business.	

Agency Specific Service Delivery Action Plan

What do you need to do?	How will you do this?	When will it happen?	What supplies are required?
e.g. Inform employees, customers and community about changes to your business hours	e.g. Develop a communications plan outlining all key messages (Refer to communication section of this toolkit)	e.g. Two weeks prior to reopening the workplace	e.g. Contact website administrators to update information on websites and social media communication channels.

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1.6 Responding to a COVID-19 infection

Considerations

Agencies should plan for how to respond if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 associated with your work site. Your plan will depend on the circumstances and whether the affected person has physically been in the workplace. It is important to take the time to plan now so your agency is confident it can respond accordingly.

Agencies are not expected, and should not try, to diagnose people. However, agencies have a work health and safety duty to minimise the risk of workers and others in the workplace being exposed to COVID-19, so far as reasonably practicable. If you reasonably suspect someone could have the virus, or has been exposed, this creates a health risk at your workplace, and you will need to follow the steps outlined in Safe Work Australia's infographic.

Practical tools

Now that you understand what to do, consider if your agency is prepared.

Use the template below to create a plan that suits your agency needs and make sure it is communicated clearly with all employees.

Your plan should:

- Outline what needs to change to ensure you can follow guidance efficiently and effectively.
- Outline what your first action will be if notified of a possible COVID-19 infection.
- State how you will clearly communicate with staff and meet privacy obligations.
- Think about how you will clean your workplace after an infection.
- Outline how your business will continue to operate or reopen.

What do you need to think about ?	What needs to happen?	What supplies do you need?
e.g. Where will the work site isolate someone if need be?	e.g. Move person to staff room and block access to other staff	e.g. gloves, masks, cleaning wipes, sign / tape to block access
e.g. how will we notify relevant authorities	e.g. Inform your line manager on duty to call the hotline once infected person has been isolated	e.g. none

1.7 Integrate your transition plan with business continuity

Agencies must ensure that transition planning considerations are included into business continuity plans, specifically:

- Appropriate health and wellbeing training.
- Emergency health protocols and emergency paths.

- Access to quarantine sites and evacuation protocols.
- Ensuring continuity for workforce segments should an outbreak and/or self-isolation be required. E.g. team A and B, hybrid on-site and remote working.

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SECTION 2

2.1 Useful links

www.comcare.gov.au/safe-healthy-work/prevent-harm/coronavirus?utm_source=website&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=covidreturn#transition
(Federal advice for COVID-19)

www.australia.gov.au

www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-COVID-19

www.smartraveller.gov.au/news-and-updates/novel-coronavirus-covid-19

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/

https://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/hr-and-policy-support/work-health-and-safety-and-injury-management/mentally-healthy-workplaces

www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites

www.sa.gov.au/

www.safework.sa.gov.au/workers/health-and-wellbeing/infectious-diseases/coronavirus-covid-19

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/

2.2 Contact phone numbers

Coronavirus Information Line - **1800 020 080**

South Australian Mental Health Support Line - **1800 632 753**

Lifeline: **13 11 14**

Beyond Blue: **1300 22 4636**

2.3 OCPSE contact

OCPSE phone number: **1800 317 333**

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