

## WORKING AT HOME POLICY

### PREFACE

We aim to be a cohesive and effective organisation. Our goal is to create a family friendly workplace and to support flexible work practices to assist staff to balance their work and family lives. Working at home is one initiative that provides flexible working arrangements.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the underlying principles of working at home and how applications to work at home will be dealt with.

Although this policy has been developed to provide flexibility to both the office and staff, it needs to be recognised that the office is, and will remain, the primary place of work and that working at home arrangements will only be approved in certain circumstances.

### RESPONSIBILITY

- Team/division managers have a responsibility to monitor working at home arrangements with particular reference to performance management and the effective and efficient operation of the team or division.
- Both the manager/supervisor and staff member are responsible for implementing and evaluating work plans in relation to the duties that will be performed at home.
- The manager/supervisor is responsible for managing the security of information and equipment in consultation with the staff member.
- The Personnel Officer is responsible for monitoring the OH&S self-assessment checklist in consultation with the staff member and relevant supervisor/manager.

### LEGISLATIVE/POLICY FRAMEWORK

Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977

Information Security Policy and Guidelines

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Version number:	2
Related policies:	Use of Communication Devices/Disclosure of Information
This policy does not supersede any other policy.	

Use of Communication Devices Policy

Disclosure of Information Policy

Personnel Handbook

Working From Home (a publication of the WorkCover Authority)

Flexible Work Practices Policies and Guidelines

## **DEFINITIONS**

Working at home – is a cooperative and consultative arrangement that allows staff members to regularly perform ordinary hours of duty at their home based work site.

Home based work site – a private dwelling.

Regular basis – one or more days per week (maximum of two days per week) for a period of four or more weeks (does not need to be consecutive). This arrangement requires a “Working at Home Agreement”, “OH&S Self Assessment Checklist for Home Based Work Site” and an “Equipment Form” to be completed prior to commencing work at home.

Adhoc basis – irregular arrangement consisting of a maximum of three working at home days within any three month period. This arrangement requires an email outlining the request and approval to work at home, and an “OH&S Self Assessment Checklist for Home Based Work Site” and “Equipment Form” to be completed prior to commencing work at home. Any arrangement in excess of this will require a formal agreement.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### ***1. Working at home arrangements to be in accordance with this policy***

All working at home arrangements must be made in accordance with this policy. However, the Ombudsman will consider on a case-by-case basis any application for an arrangement that does not comply with the guidelines in this policy.

### ***2. Working at home agreement – regular basis***

Staff working at home on a regular basis are required to be party to an individual *Working At Home Agreement*. A *Working at Home Agreement* is the record of the negotiated arrangement outlining:

- The duration of the agreement is a maximum of 12 months and new agreements will need to be negotiated and submitted if a staff member requests to extend the duration beyond 12 months
- The proportion of the staff member’s hours that will be spent working from home (maximum of two days per week, pro-rata to be negotiated with part-time staff members)
- Nominated days and hours per week to be worked at the home based work site

- The task or activities to be undertaken with an agreed level of productivity and associated performance indicators
- Security arrangements to ensure confidentiality of the office documents and electronic files
- Arrangements for the maintenance of occupational health and safety standards
- Agreed processes and mechanisms for communicating with supervisors and colleagues.
- Agreed processes for checking voice mail
- Provision of necessary equipment and resources.

## ***2. Adhoc arrangements to work at home***

Adhoc arrangements to work at home require prior written approval by the relevant team manager. An email record of the request/approval is sufficient with a copy forwarded to Personnel. A Working at Home Agreement is not required for adhoc arrangements however, all aspects of this Policy need to be adhered to, including the completion of the OH&S Self-Assessment Checklist, the availability of a Type C First Aid Kit and a fire extinguisher.

## ***3. Underlying principles of working at home agreements***

The principles that apply in negotiating and implementing working at home agreements are:

- cooperation and consultation within the relevant team or division
- flexibility to modify the arrangements at any time during the duration of the agreement, including adhoc arrangements
- equity and fairness in the implementation of the practice of working at home arrangements
- appropriate information technology and other resources are available at the home based work site
- mutuality of responsibility for productivity, outcomes and maintenance of organisational communication
- accountability and professionalism
- adherence to OH&S policies and security policies.

## ***4. Key issues***

Consideration of the following issues should precede any decision to approve staff working at home on a regular basis:

- The nature of the work and its suitability to a working at home arrangement
- The staff member's preferred work environment and need for quiet, uninterrupted time to be appropriately productive
- Whether or not this quiet environment can be provided at the work place

- Impact on colleagues in the immediate work area, particularly on workloads
- Potential positive and/or negative affect on the quality of the office's processes, practices and outcomes
- The adequacy of the proposed communication mechanisms for maintaining regular contact with supervisors, colleagues and the office as a whole
- Responsibility for supplying equipment and furniture for use in the home based work site
- The adequacy of the proposed work area and equipment in relation to the office's OH&S obligations and standards
- Insurance coverage of furniture and equipment in the home based work site
- Ensuring the arrangement is not a substitute for dependant care or sick leave
- Ensuring a medical certificate is provided if a staff member wishes to work at home because they are unfit to attend the normal work site but are otherwise able to perform their duties.

#### ***5. Modifying or terminating the arrangement***

The arrangement may be:

- modified by either party and any such modifications must be recorded in writing and agreed to by the other party
- terminated at the discretion and convenience of the team managers
- terminated by the Manager Corporate Support if the staff member fails to comply with the terms of the arrangement, their legal obligations, such as submitting flex sheets, or fails to comply with office policies. Such failure may lead to disciplinary action.

#### ***6. Criteria for approval***

A request to enter into a work at home arrangement will be considered on merit, taking into account the office's convenience and needs.

Working at home arrangements are not automatically available to any staff member. Circumstances vary and decisions to grant proposed arrangements will be based on specific requirements and the individual's reasons for requesting to work at home. A staff member's personal reasons for requesting to work at home will not be grounds in themselves for either approving or rejecting a proposal.

In considering an application to work at home, the following issues in relation to your personal computer will be considered to ensure the security of the office's information:

- appropriate licences for the software applications on your personal computer
- adequate virus protection
- adequate firewall protection

- physical security
- adequate file deletion
- remote support
- use of appropriate internet service providers
- confidentiality of documents.

## 7. *Security*

The use of information technology and other equipment, regardless of ownership, outside our premises to support business activities shall be subject to approval of your Team Manager or Deputy/Assistant Ombudsman . The same level of security protection applied to information technology equipment within the office is to be applied to equipment used off site as outlined in the Information Security Policy and any other policy referred to in the Information Security Policy. In particular the staff member is responsible for the following:

- Unless authorised by a statutory officer, only documents having the security classification of “Ombudsman in Confidence” or “Unclassified: may be taken, or sent, out of the office.
- You shall ensure that anti-virus controls are in place, up to date, configured properly and operating (the Network Security Administrator may provide advice on setting up firewalls and anti-virus software, however, it is the responsibility of the user to ensure this is done properly).
- You shall not leave equipment and media unattended in public places.
- Portable computers may be provided with appropriate forms of protection such as passwords.
- Manufacturer’s instructions regarding the protection of equipment shall be observed at all times.
- You shall either store information on your computer in such a way that only you can access it, or on diskette/cd (diskette/cd must be kept secure at all times).
- If you connect to the Internet whilst any office data is stored or used on your home computer, you must have a properly configured and operating firewall in place.

You must report security breaches to the Network Security Administrator, or any other member of the Security Committee. Most incidents could be safely reported the next day, however if you consider the incident to be of a high risk you should report it immediately.

A staff member working at home is also responsible for ensuring the same level of security protection applied to documents/information within the office is applied to all documents/information taken to the home based work site by:

- protecting confidentiality and integrity of the office’s business information by ensuring any documents/information used at the home based work site are secure at all times
- ensuring documents/information are taken to the home based work site only as required and are transported in a secure manner under plain cover and are not left behind on public transport

- ensuring all office documents/information/equipment are returned upon the resignation of an employee
- ensuring all documents are deleted to our standard (guidelines will be provided). Staff who enter into a Working at Home Agreement agree to allow a member of our Information Technology team to enter the home based work site to audit compliance with this requirement.
- providing security arrangements at the home based work site commensurate with that expected by home insurers for their suburb or town.

Equipment provided by the office will be covered by the office's insurance. The office will take responsibility for the repair or replacement of damaged or stolen office equipment in the event of theft or damage (provided the home based work site has security arrangements in place and operating which are commensurate with that expected by home insurers for their suburb or town).

Where loss or damage is from circumstances peculiar to the home based work site ie damage by children or pets, the staff member working at home will reimburse the office for the repair or replacement of the equipment.

Staff members should also take all reasonable measures to ensure that phone conversations conducted at the home based site are not overheard by any other parties.

#### **8. *First Aid Kit***

The staff member must have access to a first aid kit type C as defined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000. The staff member agrees to ensure that the kit is kept at the home based work site and to have all items replaced as required.

Staff members who have not purchased a first aid kit type C for their home based work site may borrow a kit belonging to the office on the following conditions:

- kit must be returned at the end of a regular working at home arrangement.
- kit must be obtained from Personnel at the beginning of each occasion of an adhoc working at home arrangement and returned at the end of each occasion of an adhoc working at home arrangement.
- kit must be kept in good condition and only used for the staff member working at the home based work site.
- An injury report form must be completed and provided to Personnel on each occasion that the kit is used. The report form must also include details of what items were used from the kit so that they can be replaced.

#### **9. *Fire Extinguisher***

The staff member must have access to a fire extinguisher at the home based work site.

Staff members who have not purchased a fire extinguisher for their home based work site may borrow an extinguisher belonging to the office on the following conditions:

- extinguisher must be returned at the end of a regular working at home arrangement.
- extinguisher must be obtained from Personnel at the beginning of each occasion of an adhoc working at home arrangement and returned at the end of each occasion of an adhoc working at home arrangement.
- extinguisher must be kept in good condition.
- A report must be provided to Personnel on each occasion that the extinguisher is used.

### ***10. Attendance at the normal place of work***

For any working at home arrangement, days/hours will be set for a staff member to attend their normal place of work in order to maintain work contacts, give and receive information, collect and deliver work, attend meetings and training courses.

In general, meetings with other persons in relation to office business should not take place at the staff member's home based work site. Current terms and conditions applying to staff members working at their normal place of work apply to the staff member working at home.

### ***11. Grievance procedures***

A staff member who is dissatisfied with a decision related to a request to work at home may have their case assessed through our grievance procedures. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue quickly, however the staff member will be subject to working arrangements determined by management while the issue is being resolved.

### ***12. Rehabilitation***

Staff members recovering from an injury may work at home, provided approval is given by their team manager and the Personnel Officer (Return to Work Coordinator) where applicable. They should also be able to reasonably perform their usual duties or other duties as specified by their supervisor/manager.

An application to work at home on health grounds must be supported by written medical advice with any limitations/restrictions on activities clearly stipulated.

Staff members working at home will provide the Personnel Officer and/or the nominated Rehabilitation Provider with access to the home based work site for the purpose of verifying its appropriateness for work based rehabilitation, subject to the provision of 48 hours notice or by agreement.

### ***13. Work to be performed***

A decision about whether an employee can work at home will take into account the nature of the duties performed, and whether they can be readily and safely performed at home. Considerations will include:

- Can the work be done without direct supervision?
- Does the work require face-to-face communication with clients?

- Does the work require face-to-face communication with other staff?
- What will be the impact of the arrangement on co-workers?
- Is the workflow controllable?
- What are the equipment or other resources needed to perform this work, and are they easily transportable to the home based work site?
- Are there safety issues in the performance of the work at home?
- Does the work require access to confidential documents that should not be removed from the office?

#### ***14. Work plan***

Both the manager/supervisor and staff member should agree in advance what work will be completed, including to what standard and within what time frames at the home based work site. Any work should be consistent with that normally expected of the position, as described in the relevant position description and the staff member should also ensure that they have completed their contract hours each day.

The work plan should be in writing (email is satisfactory) and should focus on achievable goals and targets which are agreed to by both parties. Regular progress reports should also be included in the work plan.

All work plans and updates should be stored in each staff members Context container (Strategic Management – Performance Management – Performance Evaluation and Reviews- X Team - {Person's} Name).

#### ***15. Self assessment of the home based work site***

All staff members are required to complete an OH&S Self-Assessment Checklist and submit the form to their manager and Personnel Officer for approval prior to commencing work at home.

Where required the Personnel Officer will discuss any issues with the staff member to ensure that the home based work site is safe. Approval to work at home will only be given where the necessary changes have been made. The office is not responsible for the costs associated with compliance.

#### ***16. Injury notification***

Where working at home has been approved:

1. The staff member will notify their manager and/or the Personnel Officer of any work related accident, injury, illness or disease arising out of the home based work site within 24 hours, and
2. Where appropriate the Personnel Officer will notify GIO and the WorkCover Authority of any accident, injury, illness, disease or incident.

Workers compensation forms will be sent to the staff member for completion and return to the Office as soon as possible.

For the purpose of an accident investigation or in the event of a dispute concerning an issue of health, safety or welfare the Personnel Officer or a WorkCover Inspector may visit the home based work site. During the visits from these officers the staff member will have the right to have a union representative or third party present.

### ***17. Equipment***

The office may provide equipment essential to performing agreed duties at the home based work site. The office will not provide furniture such as a bookcase, desk, lamp, chair, etc or meet the costs of installing an additional phone line. The office expects a staff member requesting to work at home (either on an adhoc or regular basis) to provide such furniture, lighting, etc. to ensure an ergonomically safe work environment at the home based work site.

Staff members must notify a Help Desk Officer and their supervisor/manager immediately if any office property is broken or damaged to enable repairs to be made. They will allow access to the home based work site accordingly. As staff will supply their own equipment on most occasions, this Clause refers to the occasional provision of lap-tops. All furniture and equipment owned by the office will remain the property of the office.

### ***18. Office supplies***

Office supplies such as paper and pens required for working at home may be obtained from the office after seeking approval from your supervisor or manager. Letterhead is not to be taken to the home based work site without the approval of the team/division manager.

### ***19. Access to the office network and to the internet***

The office will not provide access to the office network from the home based work site.

If a staff member requires access to the Internet while working from their home based work site it will be at their own cost.

### ***20. Telephone calls***

The office will reimburse staff members for all work related telephone calls made at the home based work site. Details of all calls must be recorded by the staff member and claims submitted to the relevant manager for approval. STD and mobile calls will be reimbursed following the production of an itemised account and details about the nature of the call.

### ***21. Other expenses***

The office will not pay for costs such as heating, lighting, electricity, gas, water, rent or wear and tear at the home based work site.

**22. Authority to approve working at home agreements**

Team/division managers have the delegation to approve working at home arrangements on the recommendation of the supervisor of the staff member wishing to work at home.

**23. Records**

Working at Home Agreements must be sent to Personnel where they will be placed on the employee's Personnel File.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. A. Barbour". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

**OMBUDSMAN APPROVAL**

Bruce Barbour

**Ombudsman**

***1. Complete a working at home agreement***

- a) Before commencing work at home the supervisor and staff member will complete a Working at Home Agreement for regular home based work. The form is located in ADM/65. *Click on the icon to access the agreement form*



Template # 81 Working At Home agreement approval form.tr5

- b) Before commencing work at home for adhoc arrangements approval must be provided by the relevant supervisor/manager and must be in writing (email will be sufficient). A Working at Home Agreement is not required for adhoc arrangements.

- c) Before commencing working at home the staff member will complete the OH&S Self-Assessment Checklist for a Home Based Work Site. This form is located in ADM/65. *Click on the icon to access the checklist*



Template # 83 Home based work site OH&S self assessment checklist.tr5

- d) Before commencing working at home the staff member will complete the Equipment Form. This form is located in ADM/65. *Click on the icon to access the equipment form*



Template # 82 Home based work site equipment form.tr5

- e) Before a Working at Home Agreement is approved, the Security Committee will assess the staff member's Working at Home Agreement in relation to the security of their personal computer (see Clause 4 Criteria for approval).

***2. Occupational health and safety***

- a) Before commencing work at home the supervisor and staff member will designate the home based work site.
- b) The staff member agrees to cooperate with the supervisor in all measures to ensure that the home based work site conforms to acceptable OH&S standards.
- c) All OH&S policies which apply at the staff member's usual place of work shall, as far as practicable, apply in carrying out home based work at the home based work site.
- d) The staff member will complete an OH&S Self-Assessment Checklist for a home based work site.
- e) The staff member will provide a photo of the designated area that will be used to undertake the home based work. A sketch plan showing the location of the designated area, including dimensions, within the home based work site should also be provided.
- f) The staff member agrees to notify their team manager or Personnel Officer as soon as is practical of any work related accident, injury, illness or disease arising out of the home based work site.

- g) The Personnel Officer shall notify GIO and if required, the WorkCover Authority of any work related accident, injury, illness, disease or incident required under Occupational Health and Safety legislation occurring at the home based work site arising out of home based work.
- h) The staff member consents to the supervisor and/or Personnel Officer having access to inspect the site subject to the provision of 48 hours notice or by agreement if required following an accident or incident. This inspection can only take place within designated working hours and the home based work site will only be inspected in relation to the accident or incident.
- i) The staff member consents to a duly appointed WorkCover Inspector entering the home based work site in the event of an accident or incident for the sole purpose of investigating the accident or incident.
- j) It is agreed that the staff member has a right to have a union representative or third party present during these visits.
- k) The staff member agrees to have access to a first aid kit type C as defined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000. The staff member agrees to ensure that the kit is kept at the home based work site in good order and to have all items replaced as required.
- l) The staff member agrees to have access to a fire extinguisher at the home based work site.

### ***3. Accommodation, furniture and equipment***

- a) The staff member and supervisor will compile a list of furniture and equipment used by the staff member in the course of carrying out work at the home based work site. The list will specify who owns the furniture, equipment and/or software. This list will be attached to the agreement/email.
- b) All furniture and equipment owned by the office will remain the property of the office.
- c) The staff member agrees to notify the office if any problems or difficulties arise with the operation of the equipment and will allow access to the home based work site to replace, service or repair the equipment if required.

### ***4. Security of assets and information***

Security of assets and information will be as agreed for the staff member's office based employment. It is agreed that the staff member will take all reasonable precautions necessary to secure the office's materials in accordance with the our Information Security Policy. This includes ensuring that paper and electronic files are suitably secured so as to be accessed only by the staff member.

### ***5. Dependant care***

It is agreed that home based work is not a suitable substitute for dependant care.

### ***6. Conditions of employment and variation in the conditions of employment***

- a) The terms and conditions of the employment between the staff member and the office that apply to the staff member's usual place of employment also apply at the home based work site.
- b) The staff member engaged in work at the home based work site and the supervisor may agree to vary any of the terms and conditions of the home based work agreement. Any variation must be agreed to by both parties and must be in writing, attached to the Agreement, and a copy forwarded to Personnel.

## ***7. Hours of work/overtime***

- a) The staff member agrees to maintain an accurate and up to date record of hours worked, including work carried out at the home based work site in accordance with the office's Co-lateral Flexible Working Hours Agreement.
- b) The staff member will record which days and actual hours that they worked at home on their flex sheet.
- c) The home based work site may be used for overtime subject to separate written agreement.
- d) Overtime hours of work will be agreed to in writing. A copy will be held by both the staff member and the supervisor for the period during which the overtime is carried out at the home based work site. Other conditions relating to overtime are contained within the relevant awards and agreements.

## ***8. Communication***

- a) The office will ensure regular opportunities for communication between supervisors, staff members and work colleagues and will take all reasonable steps to provide to the staff member with all information concerning staff meetings, training and other career development opportunities available to other staff members.
- b) The staff member agrees to be contactable during the periods in which home based work is carried out and available for communication with the other staff members as agreed.

## ***9. Performance***

- a) The supervisor agrees to ensure that the work carried out by the staff member in the home based work site is taken into account when the work performance of the staff member is under review.
- b) The staff member and supervisor agree to establish and implement an agreed work plan by which the performance of the staff member at the home based work site can be monitored in accordance with the office's performance management system.

## ***10. Training and development***

The office agrees to ensure that training and career development opportunities are provided on the same basis as for other staff.

## ***11. Termination of the home based work arrangement***

- a) The arrangement may be terminated by either party prior to expiry, provided that the party wishing to terminate gives reasonable notice.
- b) It is agreed that "reasonable" notice shall be two weeks, except where particular circumstances require a shorter or longer period.
- c) Upon termination of a Working at Home arrangement the staff member will ensure that the hard drives storing office related information on their personal computer will have all data deleted in accordance with the office's policy and procedures.