



BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

RETURNING TO WORK SAFELY PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR COMING OUT OF LOCKDOWN

SCOPE | SHIFT | START | SHARE

As our communities become more active and we continue getting back to business, we wanted to emphasise the importance of following Public Health Orders as we phase back into normality.

We'd like to reiterate government advice and procedures for what you can and can't do under the current rules for our members, as restrictions start to lift.

As restrictions lift, it's important that we:

- follow the rules about gatherings, self-isolation and quarantine
- maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres from others
- practise good hand hygiene
- stay active and healthy
- take extra care if you're around vulnerable people
- get tested if you have any symptoms, even if they are only mild
- follow NSW Health advice about staying home while you are waiting for test results.

NSW Government, Fair Trading and Safework NSW has published full guidance for employers and businesses on

coronavirus (COVID-19) which can be [read here](#).

There are also several guides to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the coronavirus pandemic.

This document summarises and interprets the Government's Helping Business Get Back to Work advice for offices, call centres and similar indoor environments, which can be [read in full here](#).

SCOPE

The first essential step is to scope and manage the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 will be with us for some time, so it is important that your business has a plan - and continues to plan - to keep your workplace healthy, safe and virus-free.

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.

The first step in preparing your business for operating in the

COVID-19 environment is to understand how your WHS risks have changed. Therefore, it's critical your business completes a risk assessment and follows guidance from Safe Work Australia.

Safe Work Australia's risk assessment guidance will help you identify how your business needs to prepare. You will need to know the current restrictions and how they apply to your business. You can also use this information to update your existing risk assessment plan for COVID-19 risks.

- Read through the Safe Work Australia advice on how to undertake a [risk assessment](#).
- Read [how to keep workers safe and limit the spread of COVID-19](#)
- Complete or update your risk assessment. Keep it somewhere safe and easily accessible. Review and update it regularly to make sure you keep on top of any new risks that may emerge or as public health advice changes. Setting a reminder in your phone can help make this a habit.

It's critical that your business completes a risk assessment and follows guidance from Safe Work Australia.

Remember to talk to your workers as soon as possible – they will also know where potential risks may exist and have ideas about how to make your workplace COVIDSafe.

After completing your business's risk assessment, you need to take to minimise the risks of COVID-19 in your workplace.

As per the national principles agreed by Australian Governments, businesses and workers must actively control against the spread of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the latest health advice, including considering the application of a [hierarchy of appropriate controls](#) where relevant.

Keeping your workplace safe and clean is likely to be one of the most important elements of managing COVID-19.

Key things to remember as you ramp up your business during and after the COVID-19 pandemic are:

- Maintain Good Hygiene
- Stay Physically Distant
- Follow Advice

Most importantly, if any members of your staff are unwell with symptoms of fever or a respiratory tract infection (such as sore throat, cold, cough, aches, or shortness of breath) tell them not to come into work and encourage them to get tested for COVID-19.

Sustainability is important – many of these changes, such as cleaning practices, will be part of your day-to-day business operations already, but you may need to do things more often or in different ways. Think about how you can make these new

practices sustainable in the long term.

Your business and your operating environment are unique. We suggest you review, adapt and update your business's risk assessment and plans regularly.

Think about how your business's hygiene and cleaning practices. Are there enough supplies? Are frequently used areas cleaned regularly? To maintain good hygiene and cleaning practices, please:

- Complete the Safe Work Australia [cleaning check list](#)
- Complete the Safe Work Australia [health, hygiene and facilities check list](#)
- Print [signs and posters](#) on good hygiene and hand washing practices
- Talk to your workers about how to maintain good hygiene and cleaning.

SHIFT

Once you have completed and shared the results of your risk assessment with your workforce, you need to prepare your staff and workplaces/premises for returning to work, in order to minimise risk, and observe the Government guidelines for social distancing and hygiene.

Think about how people interact in your business. How will you keep everyone safe? To ensure your business has appropriate physical distancing, please:

- Review the Safe Work Australia advice on [physical distancing](#)
- Complete the [physical distancing check list](#)
- Print [signs and posters](#) on how to ensure physical distancing
- Talk to your workers about how to stay physically distant and safe.

Think about what makes your business and your industry unique. What are the additional steps you need to take to keep everyone safe? How will you communicate with your customers, staff and suppliers? To help you prepare:

- Review Safe Work Australia [industry specific information](#) (this will be updated regularly so don't forget to come back)
- Complete the [what can I do to keep my workers safe at the workplace and limit the spread of COVID-19 checklist](#)
- Review the mandatory [public health directions](#) that apply to your business (these will change as time goes on)
- Talk to your workers about changes specific to your business.

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



Your plan should:

- Outline what needs to change to ensure you can follow guidance swiftly
- 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 trade or reopen.

Be aware, under NSW [public health orders](#), an employer must allow an employee to work at the person's place of residence where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

The [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) still applies if workers work somewhere other than their usual workplace, for example, from home.

This means employers have an obligation to make sure the health and safety of their workers is maintained when they work at home!

START

The way your business operates, the products you sell and services you deliver, may need to change because of COVID-19. This transition will be challenging for many businesses.

You are probably already thinking about how your business could adapt. Follow the below to map out and implement options you are considering.

Spend some time thinking about the following questions. They should act as a starting point for what is possible for your business to do.

- Do physical and social distancing requirements change the way your business engages with customers? Are you able to change the physical setup/delivery of your service so it is safe for everyone?
- What elements of your business model will be difficult to maintain in this new environment? Is there an opportunity to minimise this (for instance, by moving online)?
- Can your business temporarily change or expand the range of goods and services it offers?
- Are there opportunities to expand or change an element of your business to respond to an opportunity in the current environment?

What are some of the operational tasks that need to be done to reopen or scale-up your business?

There will be a range of tasks to get your business up and running. Consider things like:

- Contacting your bank (e.g. to reactivate merchant terminals)
- Reactivating subscriptions and licences (e.g. online booking systems, music licences etc.)
- Updating your website (e.g. with expected reopening details)
- Reaching out to your employees (e.g. organise a staff meeting to discuss reopening/scaling up procedures)
- Contacting your suppliers (e.g. to check what their lead times for production are and the impact there is on deliveries)
- Checking your building and workplace is ready to open (e.g. checking the heating, water, electricity are all connected)
- Reaching out to your industry association (Like us!!) for specific advice about reopening and recommended actions for dealing with restrictions
- Checking your legal obligations to your staff under your new arrangements (e.g. Fair Work Act, award or enterprise agreement requirements) and contacting the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) for advice if unsure
- Researching and registering for all of the relevant support/

stimulus/relief packages available. Make sure you check out what assistance your local state government is providing, along with checking in with your bank and other organisations that provide a service for your business

- Checking your insurance, including workers compensation, to make sure it covers you if you change your business model or workers' duties
- Identifying your critical resources and staff (e.g. ensuring business continuity if staff get sick)
- Making sure your Terms and Conditions and other documents reflect your new arrangements – you might need to get legal advice.
- Making sure those employees who wish to work from home are adequately prepared, supplied and informed on how to do it [safely](#).

Temporary JobKeeper provisions have been added to the Fair Work Act that enable qualifying employers, in certain circumstances, to change eligible employees' usual duties, location, and agree with their employee to change days and times of work.

This means you could ask employees to come in for a planning meeting, set up the workspace, or complete other important tasks, providing you meet all obligations and ensure the correct amount of pay for the hours worked.

For more information on how this might apply to your business, contact the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

If you are unsure how JobKeeper rules operate, contact the [Australian Tax Office](#).

START

Making sure you pass on the correct information and guidance to staff, clients, and other people you deal with is vital to ensuring people understand your measures and how to work safely.

Communications and training

To make sure all your staff are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated, there must be ongoing engagement with staff to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.

Decide what people need to know so they can continue working safely. This could include:

- Changes to when and where breaks happen;
- Times people arrive and leave work;
- When they need to clean parts of their work areas;
- When they should be washing hands and/or using sanitiser;
- Procedures and guidance on Test and Trace and self-isolation;

Decide the best way to pass on information and guidance to

your staff and contractors. Think about how you can reinforce information and guidance and check that people have understood it and are following it. You should:

- Use visual communications, for example, whiteboards or digital or printed signage, to explain to staff and residents changes to procedures, schedules or breakdowns to reduce the need for face-to-face communications;
- Use simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language.
- Communicate approaches and operational procedures to your clients, contractors, suppliers, and residents to help their adoption and to share experience.

Staff concerns

Talk through specific concerns with the member of staff; talk with all staff about what can be done to help them feel safe. This may include providing information about coronavirus and what people can do to protect themselves.

Updating information and guidance

Over time, it is likely that you will have to adapt and change your plans for working safely during the coronavirus outbreak. You need to review your plans regularly and ensure that you update staff and clients as they are adapted and changed.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means now known or to be invented, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information or retrieval system without written permission from the author or publisher, except for the brief inclusion of quotations in a review.

DISCLAIMER: Please note the information enclosed is general in nature and cannot be relied upon as legal advice. Strata Community Association (NSW) Ltd and its members disclaims any liability (including for negligence) to any person in respect of: anything; and the consequences of anything, done, or not done, by any such person in whole or partial reliance upon the whole or part of the information enclosed.



Strata Community Association (NSW) is the peak industry body for Strata and Community Title Management in New South Wales. Membership includes strata managers, support staff, committee members and suppliers of products and services to the industry. SCA (NSW) has in excess of 3,000 members who represent over 75% of strata lots in NSW by way of helping to oversee, advise or manage a combined property portfolio with an estimated replacement value of over \$400 Billion. SCA (NSW) proudly fulfils the dual roles of a professional institute and consumer advocate.

Contact: (02) 9492 8200 | enquiries.nsw@strata.community | <https://nsw.strata.community/>