

## STAFF INFOSHEET

# Novel Coronavirus

## Managing remote teams: a guideline for managers

*For the foreseeable future, the way in which the state service operates has fundamentally changed and managing remote teams is the new reality for many of us. Working from home arrangements are not new although for some, it may be our first time experiencing managing remote teams and for the majority of us, our first time experiencing it on such a wide scale. This guide has been developed to support managers as the state service transitions to increased working from home arrangements and should be read in conjunction with other relevant whole of government guidelines and agency specific information.*

### Trust

Approach new working from home arrangements with trust. There's no reason to believe, in this new environment, people won't do the work they've been assigned; assume your team will continue to perform their duties and fulfil their responsibilities.

### Set expectations early and clearly

Make expectations crystal clear including establishing priorities and realistic deadlines. Work with your team to understand what they think they should be doing and how they can reprioritise their work so they are able to support an essential service where possible, and work from home where this can be supported. For employees that may have reassigned or changed duties, also be clear about what 'good' looks like and consider providing examples. Ultimately, the more clarity that can be given the better.

### Work to outputs

Establish what a reasonable output might look like on a weekly basis and establish regular check-ins to see how pieces of work are progressing. Productivity does not have to go down, it can be maintained or even enhanced because commutes and office distractions are gone, however accept you might see a dip in productivity because we're in an environment of radical change and uncertainty; people are distracted, families and communities are being affected. Another factor may be the ability of employees to quickly resolve problems in real time. Speak openly with employees to understand what barriers or challenges they may be facing and work to address these with them in the first instance.

### Accept flexibility

Many employees are balancing multiple demands including work, supervising children, the health and wellbeing of themselves and their family, social isolation, and greater caring responsibilities for older or at risk family members. Accept that standard ways of working won't necessarily apply and support employees to work in ways that accommodate their needs as well as those of the agency.

### Communication

Be diligent about communicating effectively. Employees who are accustomed to working in an office environment may feel isolated and may not have easy access, particularly in real time, to all of the information they need to do their job or to new or updated information.

Consider the frequency of check-ins that will suit your team's work. For example, you may schedule a daily team check in and aim for weekly one-on-one check-ins via video conferencing (outside of the Government network if possible). Your team needs to see you and you need to see them. The good news is that services like Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams makes this relatively easy;

you should speak to your manager or seek advice from your ICT Department as to the preferred solution within your agency. The purpose is simple, provide the feedback and resources your team needs.

Please also see separate guide on staying connected.

## Support your team

A sudden change in the way people work can be hard on individuals so make sure you are giving both practical and emotional support. Encourage open conversations in which employees can raise concerns; be affirming about the value and importance of the work they are doing and their role as a state servant and reassure them you will support them to work in ways that support team goals and agency priorities as well as their individual circumstances.

Some teams will have employees who are still working in the office or their worksite because the function they perform requires this or because, for a variety of reasons, they do not wish to work from home. It is important to be cognisant that as the COVID-19 situation evolves, there may be a time when we need to ask most employees to work from home, regardless of personal preference. If a government announcement is made to this effect, resources to support you manage under these circumstances will be made available. Whether employees are working from home or at work, managers need to work hard to ensure teams remain cohesive.

Please also see separate guide on health and wellbeing.

## Keep the workplace safe

One of your key tasks is to keep the workplace safe. Encourage employees to maintain healthy work/life balance; maintain personal hygiene and cover coughs and sneezes (into elbow or disposable tissue), maintain social distancing and keep work surfaces clean. Ensure that employees displaying flu/virus like symptoms seek medical advice and take action to avoid transmission, and keep staff aware of the latest advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19) by directing them to visit [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au).

## Assigning duties

In order to resource and maintain essential services, it is likely that staff will need to be reassigned from non-essential services to essential services. You may need to reassign duties to staff within Divisions to maintain high priority (but non-essential) services, according to business continuity plans, noting that these may have to be re-prioritised if essential services and/or whole of government needs require.

At the whole-of-Government level, the reassignment of employees to maintain essential services will be coordinated using interoperability arrangements.

## Performance management

The fundamentals of managing performance, clarity of expectation and clear and open communication, have not changed and it is important that you continue to manage employee performance even when located remotely. Now is a great time to revisit work plans and set clear KPIs with your employees for what they should be achieving during this period. Re-familiarise yourself with your agency's performance management process.

## Legislation and standards

Working from home employees are still governed by the existing industrial framework and relevant legislation which includes the *State Service Act 2000*; *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*; and the *Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1998*.

It is important to remember that the *State Service Act 2000* Code of Conduct and Principles still apply as do Employment and Ministerial Directions. Familiarise yourself with your responsibilities through reviewing the relevant information, which can be found on the [SSMO legislation section of www.dpac.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au)

## Stay informed

Stay up to date through trusted and credible sources of information. There are a range of resources available to you including your colleagues, manager and agency intranet. For whole of government information you can access [www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo) and to get the latest advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19) please visit [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au).

## Support

Your agency's Employee Assistance Program is available to provide confidential counselling and support to employees and managers.