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National COVID-19 safe workplace principles

Page last updated: 29 Apr 2020

Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency, that all actions in respect of COVID-19 should be founded in expert health advice and that the following principles operate subject to the measures agreed and implemented by governments through the National Cabinet process

1. All workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic requires a uniquely focused approach to work health and safety (WHS) as it applies to businesses, workers and others in the workplace.
3. To keep our workplaces healthy and safe, businesses must, in consultation with workers, and their representatives, assess the way they work to identify, understand and quantify risks and to implement and review control measures to address those risks.
4. As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, businesses, workers and other duty holders must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices, consistent with advice from health authorities, to ensure their workplaces are ready for the social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures that will be an important part of the transition.
5. Businesses and workers must actively control against the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the latest advice from the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#) , including considering the application of a hierarchy of appropriate controls where relevant.
6. Businesses and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with advice from health authorities.
7. Existing state and territory jurisdiction of WHS compliance and enforcement remains critical. While acknowledging that individual variations across WHS laws mean approaches in different parts of the country may vary, to ensure business and worker confidence, a commitment to a consistent national approach is key. This includes a commitment to communicating what constitutes best practice in prevention, mitigation and response to the risks presented by COVID-19.
8. Safe Work Australia (SWA), through its tripartite membership, will provide a central hub of WHS guidance and tools that Australian workplaces can use to successfully form the basis of their management of health and safety risks posed by COVID-19.
9. States and Territories ultimately have the role of providing advice, education, compliance and enforcement of WHS and will leverage the use of the SWA central hub in fulfilling their statutory functions.
10. The work of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission will complement the work of SWA, jurisdictions and health authorities to support industries more broadly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic appropriately, effectively and safely.

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To ensure this information is as accessible and easy to understand as possible, we refer to 'employers' and their responsibilities.

However, under [the model WHS laws](#), duties apply to any person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) which includes employers, but also others who engage workers. For more information about who is a PCBU see our [Interpretive Guideline – model Work Health and Safety Act – the meaning of 'person conducting a business or undertaking'](#).

The model WHS laws have been implemented in all jurisdictions except Victoria and Western Australia.

Safe Work Australia does not regulate or enforce WHS laws or the recently introduced COVID-19 restrictions on business operations. If you want to know how WHS laws apply to you or need help with what to do at your workplace, [contact the WHS regulator](#) in your jurisdiction. If you want to know what restrictions on business operations apply to you or your workplace, go to your relevant [state and territory government website](#) for information.

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