

## Telecommuting

### Purpose and Scope

Telecommuting is a flexible work practice which enables some employees, including employees who are also managers, to better accommodate the demands of work and family life. Telecommuting may enable people to remain in employment from a remote location, balance family commitments rather than take a full day off, return to work from parental or other leave, or remain in employment for a longer period than first envisaged prior to retirement. Telecommuting opportunities form part of the Department's Health and Wellbeing Program.

### References

- [Public Service Act 1996](#)
- [Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003](#)
- [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#)
- [Industrial Relations Act 1999](#)
- [Queensland Public Service Award – State 2003](#)
- [Family Leave \(Queensland Public Sector\) Award – State 2004](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- Policy – [Workplace Health and Safety](#)
- Policy – [Hours of Work Arrangement](#)
- Departmental publication – [Work-Life: Employees guide to finding balance](#)
- Departmental publication – [Health and Wellbeing Program](#)

### 1. What is telecommuting?

Telecommuting is a workplace initiative that allows employees to work from home or outside of the central workplace. Telecommuting can be done on a full-time or part-time basis.

Telecommuting may enable people to gain or maintain employment from a remote location; balance family commitments rather than take a full day off; return to work from parental or other leave; or remain in employment for a longer period prior to retirement.

Telecommuting should not be used as a means to avoiding the workplace. It should not be offered to employees who live reasonably close to the workplace (eg; 30 minutes travel in one direction). It should be noted that the regular workplace will remain the primary workplace, with the telecommuting site deemed a secondary workplace.

### 2. Who may telecommute?

Telecommuting is neither the right of an individual nor an employer obligation. Approval to telecommute is not automatic or guaranteed. The employees work and work related attributes are relevant factors which must be assessed as suitable for telecommuting.

Work suitable for telecommuting conditions includes work that can be performed away from the employees' usual workplace provided the environment is suitable and the necessary

telecommunication and information technology (IT) equipment is available. The telecommuting policy requirements must be met.

If telecommuting is deemed to be appropriate, a telecommuting agreement will be put in place by the employer and employee. A telecommuting agreement is to be reviewed and renewed as necessary but at a minimum must be done annually.

### **3. What are the employer's responsibilities?**

- Provision and maintenance IT hardware, software and support;
- Provision of workplace insurance;
- Payment of all reasonable and normal operational costs associated with the conduct of departmental business; and
- Workplace health and safety (WHS) assessments.

### **4. What are the employee's responsibilities?**

- Provision of suitable office furniture at employee's cost;
- Provision of suitable internet connection and phone line at employee's cost;
- Complete a WHS Self Assessment form;
- Sign an approved telecommuting agreement prior to commencing any telecommuting arrangement;
- Achieve agreed outcomes and reporting for the position and be available during agreed contact hours;
- Ensure that appropriate dependant care arrangements are in place;
- Adhere to the departments Code of Conduct;
- Ensure adequate security measures are in place to address confidentiality and access to information;
- Provide due care and comply with the appropriate standards for the use of the departments equipment and ensure that any equipment supplied is used only for official purposes;
- Adhere to WHS legislation and requirements, maintain the workplace in a reasonable and appropriate condition and notify the department of any work related incidents or accidents as soon as possible;
- Provide access for departmental staff at agreed times for ongoing maintenance of any equipment or management of WHS issues;
- Participate in information sessions specifically designed for employees engaged in telecommuting;
- Travel to the primary workplace as required at the employee's own cost and in their own time;
- Ascertain the personal implications of working from home with respect to taxation, leasing or mortgage arrangements and any relevant local government by-laws; and
- Comply with the disclosure provisions of private insurance policies.

### **5. What are the Manager's responsibilities?**

- Assess the position's suitability for home-based work against the approved criteria;
- Prepare and sign an approved telecommuting agreement prior to an employee commencing telecommuting arrangement;
- Identify the expected results and outcomes of the telecommuting within clearly defined time lines and agreed reporting requirements;
- Formulate the method of ensuring that the telecommuter received work related information at home;
- Build in opportunities for the employee to regularly participate in office activities and team meetings;

- Ensure that arrangements are in place for the completion of timesheets, leave applications etc and that hours of duty comply with the approved hours of work policy;
- In consultation with the employee determine contact hours for communicating with the employee and ensure that a contact number at the telecommuting site is provided to people who need to know it;
- Arrange for the proposed work site to be assessed by a qualified WHS officer and regularly re-assess the telecommuting site;
- In consultation with the employee, agree upon the method of measuring work performance including opportunities for regular review against predetermined criteria with regular feedback.

## **6. What about workplace health and safety?**

Workplace health and safety (WHS) responsibilities for both the employer and employee apply as they would at the central workplace. A WHS self assessment should be completed by the potential telecommuter, followed by a WHS Officer assessment using the standard WHS telecommuting report completed on the designated telecommuter workplace, ongoing audit/inspection access as required and the designated workplace being maintained by the telecommuter to a safe standard as required by existing legislation and regulations. The telecommuter should notify the organisation of any work related incident, accident, injury, or illness while telecommuting.

## **7. What about information technology?**

The Information Technology (IT) connection to the telecommuting location, the IT equipment, maintenance and security must be in accordance with the Department's IT policies. Management of the IT equipment, software, hardware, licenses, services and support must be documented in the telecommuting agreement. The ITS branch:

- Must conduct an IT assessment at the telecommuting site;
- Must approve all IT equipment used for telecommuting;
- Will support the telecommuters' IT operations at the telecommuting address;
- Will provide information to managers about the IT costs associated with telecommuting.

## **8. What about furniture, equipment and insurance?**

An employee must use their own furniture and equipment and it must be approved by the WHS Officer. The WHS Officer will conduct an Equipment and Furniture Assessment during the WSH Assessment. In exceptional circumstances, the department may provide a reasonable level of equipment and furniture necessary for telecommuting.

## **9. What about insurance at the telecommuting site?**

Telecommuters are required to have adequate home insurance. When telecommuting from home, the following insurance circumstances apply:

- If a liability arises entirely from a work related activity, the telecommuter will be indemnified under the department's insurance policy.
- If liability falls entirely from a non-work related activity, the department's insurance policy will not apply.
- It is possible that insurance liability may be assessed proportionally.

## **10. What forms and agreements are necessary for telecommuting?**

There are several measures put in place to ensure the effectiveness of a telecommuting arrangement. The work arrangements must be agreed upon in advance with clear performance

indicators and feedback processes, communication strategies, location and type of work contact, team and client interaction, and training and career development opportunities.

The telecommuting agreement must be reviewed regularly, and as a minimum must be reviewed annually. The manager and telecommuter must ensure that the following forms are completed before the commencement of a telecommuting arrangement:

Form A	Application Form
Form B	Cost / Benefit Assessment
Form C	Suitability Assessment
Form D (i)	WHS Self Assessment
Form D (ii)	WHS Officer Assessment
Form E	ITS Assessment
Form F	Equipment & Furniture Assessment
Form G	Agreement
Form H	Work Management Strategy
Form I	Communication Strategy

#### **11. Guidelines and Policies to be aware of when implementing a telecommuting arrangement:**

- Information technology policy
- Information technology security policy
- Hours of work arrangement
- Code of Conduct
- WHS Fact Sheet(s)

#### **Further information and assistance**

For further information and assistance please contact:

Director  
Organisational Capability Branch, Department of Justice and Attorney-General  
GPO Box 149, Brisbane Qld 4001  
Telephone (07) 3239 6797 Fax (07) 3229 6671

#### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed three (3) years from the date of approval by the Director-General.

## Version History

The following outlines the high level changes that have been made to each version of this document and who made them:

Version	Notes	Change officer(s)	Date of change
1.0	Previously approved version		July 2004
2.0	Review	Kirsten Eades	January 2008
	Approved	Board of Management	11 February 2008