COVID-19 WORKING FROM HOME ADVICE FOR MEMBERS

ADVICE, CONTENT AND GUIDANCE HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY ASSOCIATE MEMBER GREG BOWMER AT BARE BONES CONSULTING:

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While your first priority should be managing the health and safety risks associated with working from home arrangements, I suggest you also consider ways you can maintain productivity from your team. It's not that complicated to put in place a structure to maximise employee output at the same time but let's go with the safety and compliance factor first: In Australia, the model work health and safety laws still apply to all businesses if workers are required to work somewhere other than their usual workplace…working from home, for example. In this situation employers must still ensure – so far as is reasonably practicable – the health and safety of their workers.

Before entering into a working from home (aka: "telecommuting") arrangement, employers should consider a range of factors, including:

- workers' compensation requirements
- taking reasonable steps to ensure an employee's work area at home meets workplace health and safety requirements
- effective ways to communicate with the worker while on the arrangement
- use of equipment

Key health and safety elements to consider include:

- risks associated with slips, trips and falls
- workstation ergonomics
- manual tasks and electrical safety
- psychosocial risks such as personal security and isolation
- environmental hazards such as noise.

Safety assessment findings and the measures implemented to control any identified risks should be documented and agreed by all parties involved before the telecommuting arrangement commences.

Along with health and safety factors, employers should formally confirm with the employee the productivity expectations while working away from the office. While it may be unrealistic to expect each and every employee will operate at optimal capacity during this time, there are a number of simple procedures employers can put in place to ensure workers deliver output at least equivalent to that if the person was working from their usual office location.

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