

# Working from home - guideline

## Introduction

This guideline is to assist agencies and employees to make the necessary arrangements to support working from home (WFH).

As a general principle, the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) is committed to providing employees flexibility to assist in balancing work and life under the [flexible working arrangements](#). This guideline is to be read in conjunction with the [NTPS 2017 - 2021 EA, Clause 34, Work Life Balance](#) and equivalent clauses in other NTPS agreements.

Decisions about working from home must be supported by the relevant supervisor and approved by the Agency CEO or delegate. Fair and reasonable consideration must be given to employee requests for WFH and any reasons for refusal must be provided in writing.

## COVID-19 and working from home

Working from home may provide an avenue to assist vulnerable employees or employees caring for vulnerable people manage any specific risks posed to them by COVID-19.

If it is thought that a team or larger group might need to work from home during the current COVID-19 situation, an initial trial of the arrangement should be considered as early as practicable to ensure the arrangement is viable. Managers and employee should also consider roster for employees working from home so that 'social distancing' principles can be ensured. For example, half of a team might work from home one part of the week, and the other half work from home the remainder of the week.

Should an employee be required to self-isolate but still able to work, they may continue to work from home for the duration of their self-isolation period (there are exceptions in relation to returns to the Northern Territory following international and interstate travel). Similarly, if a lock-down period is in place and an employee is able to work from home, the conditions below will continue to apply.

If an employee is unwell and/or needs to provide care to someone else, access to leave arrangements will be in accordance with the advice provided by the Commissioner for Public Employment.

It is acknowledged that this is a highly unusual arrangement which is subject to review. Arrangements made specifically to manage the COVID-19 situation, will be reviewed to accommodate any necessary changes in either work requirements or to reflect and ensure consistency with advice from the Commissioner for Public Employment, the Chief Health Officer, and other national authorities.

In the changing environment and need to prioritise both service and resources are required, there is the possibility that a WFH arrangement for non-essential work will be ceased due to critical reallocation of resources or the inability for tasks to be managed by supervisors.

All endeavours will be made to provide advance notice of any changes but this may not always be possible in light of the rapidly changing environment in which we are currently working.

## Duration of WFH arrangement

WFH may be an ongoing arrangement for an individual or may be used for a team or larger group particularly at a time of an emergency situation. Each arrangement should be for a fixed period (for example three months) with a clear review point for each party to consider any changes that might be needed.

If the WFH arrangement is made to specifically manage COVID-19, the WFH arrangement must be reviewed for consistency with current advice from the Chief Health Officer, and other national authorities.

## Code of Conduct

The NTPS Code of Conduct continues to apply when employees are working from home under a WFH agreement.

## Key considerations for employees

- An employee, in conjunction with their supervisor, should consider whether their job can be fully or partially worked from home.
- A key principle in consideration is the ability to deliver without impact to customers or other work colleagues.
- The ability to work from home should take into consideration any family or caring responsibilities that the employee may have, particularly in extenuating circumstances, such as in the event of school and childcare closures.
- Working from home can be a combination of work and leave arrangements e.g. part-day work / part-day carers leave. An employee should discuss their circumstances with their supervisor.
- While working from home, the employee will be required to complete duties, wherever practicable in line with their actual position or other duties as directed by their supervisor or delegate.
- If an employee normally completes and submits fortnightly timesheets this is required to continue during any periods working from home.
- If you are unwell, or caring for a household member who is unwell (and this has not been considered in your agreement), you are not required to work. The appropriate personal or carer's leave arrangements need to be applied.
- Once satisfied that the employee can work from home, to minimise the risk to health and safety, the following are required to be completed by the employee:
  - Working from home agreement
  - Working from home checklist- self-assessment
- The Employee must forward their work phone through to a personal mobile or home phone, where possible.
- The Employee agrees to be contactable and available for communication with the supervisor and other staff, clients and stakeholders on the agreed hours and days of work. The Employee is required to be available via telephone, skype, FaceTime or video link to attend meetings, as required.
- Under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011, the Employer must ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees during work hours.

## Key considerations for supervisors

The supervisor is required to discuss the proposed arrangement with the employee and be satisfied that the employees' duties can be adequately performed outside the workplace (at home) to ensure business continuity can be applied to customers or other employees.

The supervisor should satisfy the following:

- That the employee has considered their own health and safety, by completing the working from home checklist - self-assessment.
- The employee is able to perform their usual duties or other duties as directed by the supervisor or delegate from their home or alternative WFH location,
- That any family or caring responsibilities that the employee may have, are considered in the event they may hinder the ability to work effectively from home. Work from home arrangements are not to be used as a substitute for personal/carer's leave.
- The employee is fit and well to work. If the employee is unwell or unable to work due to other reasons, then leave entitlements are to be accessed.
- A review period for an employees' working from home agreement is agreed to and is to be made in accordance with any government direction.
- Reasonable contact is maintained and any communications are provided to employees working from home and information is satisfactorily disseminate.
- The employee has access to the appropriate VPN, teleconferencing or other means to remotely connect to meetings.
- Supervisors must consider alternative work locations as well as the employees home location when supporting a WFH agreement e.g. employee who are required to travel to other locations, such as Animal welfare Officers to undertake their duties.

## Support resources

- Employees approved to work from home will be able to access their work emails via either VPN, VDI, Webmail or MDM via mobile. If they do not have VPN access, their supervisor will provide the necessary documents via work email. For more information please [click here](#)
- If they have VPN access, employees will be able to access NTG records via LAN, TRM and other systems, such as TRIPS.
- It is noted that access to support resources may be affected by supply due to limited availability of NTG resources and/or connectivity issues. Should this occur, an employee should advise their supervisor as soon as possible (via phone or email).
- Should an employee require ICT support, they should contact the NTG Service Desk on 1800 000 254.
- To participate in team meetings while an employee is working from home, the NTG teleconference facilities should be used.
- Prior to commencing WFH, employees should print/separately record contact details for your team colleagues and particularly your supervisor and manager. Please also record the details for the NTG Service Desk, for ease of access in the event you cannot access Webmail etc.

## Office set-up

Employees will be required to complete a self-assessment to check confirming their workspace, computer, etc. are set up appropriately. Please refer to the working from home checklist - self-assessment.

## Security requirements

- Employees should take all practical measures to ensure confidentiality and security, including locking electronic devices when not in attendance.
- Cabinet-in-confidence and other relevant caveats must continue to be used on emails and other correspondence.
- Confidential documents should only be printed where personal signatures are required. Standard records management procedures continue to apply and, if an employee is unable to register records via the remote workstation, printed documents must be secured appropriately until the employee can return to the workplace and register the documents.

## Further information

OCPE contact details: [enquiries.ocpe@nt.gov.au](mailto:enquiries.ocpe@nt.gov.au)