Safe return to the workplace

Queensland has done such a remarkable job in responding to COVID-19 that everyone can feel safe at work.

Queensland is continuing to ease restrictions as we move toward a new COVID-19 normal.

For this reason, public servants who have been working from home are now encouraged to increase their presence in their usual workplace.

Are there any COVID-19 restrictions on a workplace?

Unless your workplace is a restricted business (defined in the *Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction),* there are no COVID-19 restrictions that apply. For example, office environments are not restricted under current Public Health Directions.

For non-restricted workplaces, each individual workplace can make decisions about how to support staff to safely increase their presence in the workplace.

It is important to remember that every workplace must continue to comply with existing workplace health and safety obligations to ensure the safety of workers and others. This includes continuing COVID-safe practices, including hand hygiene and physical distancing.

Do occupant density requirements apply at work?

Occupant density limits do not apply in non-restricted workplaces, including offices. For example, there are no COVID-19 restrictions on the number of people who can be in:

- foyers
- tea rooms
- bathrooms
- meeting rooms
- shared office workspaces
- lifts.

Whilst there are no density limits on the number of people who can be in a lift at the same time, building owners can make decisions on lift capacity based on the size of the lift. For example, most office building lifts will be able to safely accommodate up to six people.

Individual workplaces can also make decisions around managing attendance, using measures such as staggered start and finish times, rostering and compressed hours, as appropriate.

What does this mean for returning to a workplace?

Queensland public servants are encouraged to start discussions with their employer about increasing their presence in the workplace.

COVID-safe measures are in place in Queensland public service workplaces. You can refer to your local plan for more detail on what measures have been implemented in your workplace, including:

- regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-traffic areas and high-touch surfaces
- ongoing provision of alcohol-based sanitiser and soap for hand washing
- ongoing hygiene practices and physical distancing whenever possible

How do I continue to stay COVID-19 safe in my workplace?

To keep our workplaces COVID-19 safe, you should still:

- stay home if you are sick
- get tested if you have any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild
- wash your hands often, using soap and water or hand sanitiser
- stay 1.5 metres away from other people (think two big steps), wherever possible
- sneeze or cough into your arm or a tissue, then dispose of the tissue in the bin
- limit food handling and sharing of food in the workplace
- avoid handshakes, hugs and kisses.

How can I travel safely to my workplace?

The Queensland Government has worked closely with public transport providers to ensure COVID-safe measures are in place on all Queensland public transport, including:

- additional cleaning of buses, trains, ferries and stations
- additional bus and train services to support flexible travel
- use of cashless payment methods
- increased COVID-safe public messaging.

There may be situations where you are not able to maintain physical distancing while on public transport. It is recommended that you carry a face mask with you for such situations, for additional protection. While masks are not mandatory, you may wish to wear a mask when it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres from other people.

Who should I contact to discuss my work arrangements?

You should contact your line manager and discuss the options available for increasing your presence in the workplace, including accessing flexible work arrangements (e.g. working from home, working remotely, compressed hours or staggered start and finish times).

Regular conversations should occur between managers and employees, to ensure that any arrangements put in place continue to promote practical, productive and safe workplaces.

Your local Human Resources team can also be contacted for further advice on increasing your presence in the workplace.