



# COVID-19 WHS GUIDE

Keeping people and work safe & healthy

Produced by Kitney Pty Ltd – Edition 1 / April 2020

[www.kitney.com](http://www.kitney.com)

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We trust you find this COVID-19 Business Guide helpful for business work health and safety management. The Guide provides general guidance and is provided subject to our [Terms of Use](#)

# INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of COVID-19 our working and home lives have changed enormously. While many have shifted to home-based work, there remains a significant number of people continuing to go to work. This COVID-19 WHS Guide provides information for business on actions to provide a safe workplace and keep workers and others they come in contact with safe and healthy.

# Introduction

Managing the work health and safety risks of COVID-19 is a critical cog in the wheel of business. With the risks of COVID-19 likely to be with us for some time ahead, firming up a company's COVID-19 WHS arrangements will be important for businesses to continue to operate and trade.

This Guide provides general information to assist Queensland businesses to manage the work health and safety risks with COVID-19. It directs you to key information sources and provides links for general COVID-19 information.

As circumstances may differ across business, the Guide is for general informational purposes only. The Guide may not be applicable to your specific circumstances and does not constitute legal advice. You should seek advice before acting or relying on any of the content.





# ABOUT COVID-19

Even though numbers of COVID-19 appear to be managed here in Queensland, we have some way to go before our business and working lives return to normal. Understanding the risks and knowing how to adequately respond to COVID-19 will be important to support and enable business response and recovery in Queensland, Australia and globally.

# About COVID-19

## What we know

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that have been causing problems for humanity for a long time. The impact of previous outbreaks, such as SARS and MERS, was less than the global havoc unleashed by the new coronavirus disease COVID-19.

### What we have learned about this new Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Unlike its predecessors, COVID-19 can be transmitted by humans earlier in the course of the infection, even when people aren't showing symptoms.

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders and those with underlying medical problems are more likely to develop illness and complications which may result in death.

At present there is no vaccine or cure. The best way to prevent and protect yourself and others from infection is by physical distancing, washing your hands or using an alcohol based rub frequently and not touching your face.

In the workplace, we can prevent the spread of infection by identifying and controlling high risk activities, distancing and ensuring high risk objects and surfaces are cleaned regularly to reduce contamination.



## What we don't know

There is much we don't know about COVID-19 which can add to the complexity of managing the risks.

Virologists estimate the incubation period in the body is between 2-14 days. Depending on conditions the virus can survive outside the human body on various surfaces from hours to days.

Medical researchers are working to find a COVID-19 vaccine, treatment or cure, but we don't know how soon these will be available and could be months to a year away.

Most significantly what we don't know is what will happen and how long the pandemic will last in Australia and globally. Public health and business control measures will be important in the short, medium and longer-term.

# WHS OBLIGATIONS & BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Whether you're responsible for workers or a worker in the workplace, understanding WHS obligations and controls for COVID-19 is important.

To continue to operate, businesses must identify COVID-19 WHS hazards and eliminate these.

Where not possible, the business must consider whether a control measure is available and if it is 'reasonably practicable' to implement the measure. Businesses should also plan to respond to cases of COVID-19 should they arise at work.

# WHS Obligations

Australia's WHS legislation places the primary health and safety duty on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) or employer. Obligations are also placed on officers of a PCBU, workers and other persons at a workplace.

Visit [Safe Work Australia](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) website to understand the WHS laws in your jurisdiction.



## Employers/PCBU

Employers or the PCBU, have a duty of care for the health and safety of their workers and others at the workplace. This includes:

- providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risk to health and safety, and
- providing adequate facilities for workers in carrying out their work.

## Officers of a PCBU

Officers have a duty to exercise due diligence to ensure that the PCBU meets its work health and safety obligations. The duty requires officers to be proactive in ensuring that the company/PCBU complies with its duty.

## Workers

Workers (including contractors and volunteers) are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care of their own health and safety
- not adversely affect the health and safety of others, and
- following any reasonable directions given and in place, including those for to COVID-19 and if working from another location, such as a home-based work.

## Others

Others (such as visitors, suppliers) are responsible for following any reasonable directions given and in place, including COVID-19 response and restrictions in workplaces.

# Business Continuity

Managing COVID-19 fits within your business continuity plan (BCP) and COVID-19 WHS management plan, both of which provide broad and high-level direction for establishing the expectations, framework and monitoring regimes for business and COVID-19 WHS management.

BCP and COVID-19 management plans may vary in size and formality, however they should enable good governance, due diligence, integration with business processes, which are important to provide workers and the business with protection to ensure WHS legal obligations are met and harm from hazards in work prevented.

A BCP framework based on [ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines](#) provides a good base for business continuity, the figure on the left show the risk management framework from ISO 31000.

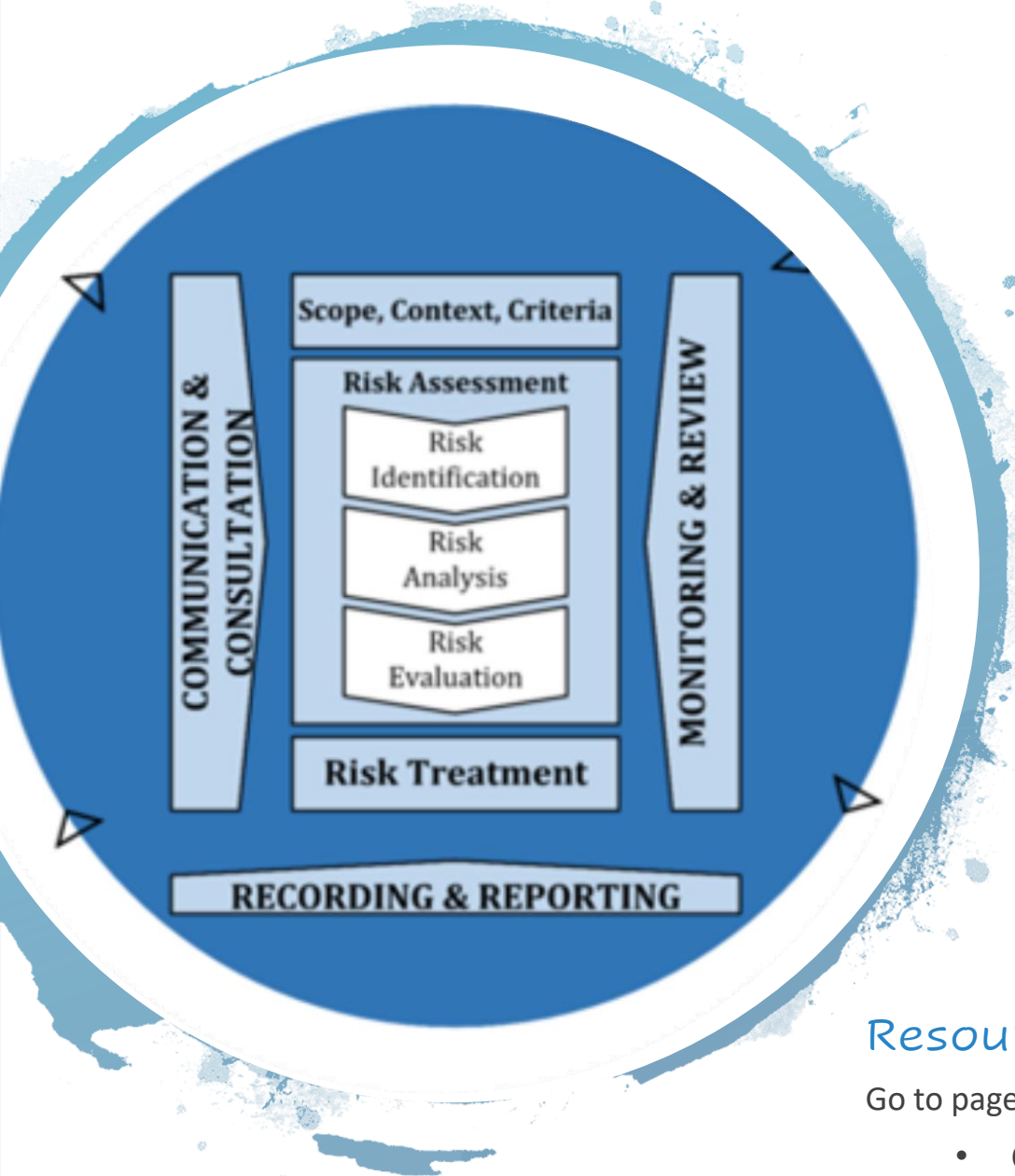
The COVID-19 WHS management plan provides the forum for the business to demonstrate leadership and commitment in order to:

- Examine and understand the impact of COVID-19 in your business
- Assign authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Identify and manage risks and confirm the allocation of resources
- Establish means for communication and consultation
- Monitor and measure performance to determine effectiveness.

## Resource

Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates:

- COVID-19 WHS Management Plan



# COVID-19 WHS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The COVID-19 WHS Management Plan is a broad and high-level plan to enable strategic and operational decision-making and actions. For responding to emerging situations such as COVID-19, the Plan should relate to your business continuity plan and WHS management system.

The COVID-19 WHS Management Plan places a focus on key management areas, responsibilities, and performance reporting.

# COVID-19 WHS Management Plan

The COVID-19 WHS management plan should be structured to suit the business. We have identified 5 key areas that provide a holistic and robust approach to COVID-19 WHS management, as shown below and on the following pages.



## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

To ensure an effective framework for COVID-19 hazard identification, risk assessment, control, review and continuous improvement.



## **WORK MANAGEMENT**

To ensure effective WHS management of work areas and work activities and minimise risks of COVID-19 exposure.



## **PEOPLE MANAGEMENT**

To ensure effective management of workers and others who may be impacted by COVID-19, including higher risk persons.



## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

To ensure sufficient and suitable resources are available for the effective management of COVID-19.



## **COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT**

To ensure effective consultation and timely communications for the ongoing management of COVID-19.

## **Resource**

Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates:

- COVID-19 WHS Management Plan

# Risk Management

Risk Management is a proactive process that helps you identify and manage a hazard or concern with important principles that can be applied to all hazards, including COVID-19. By taking a planned and systematic approach, you can address all reasonably foreseeable hazards and risks associated with COVID-19 in the workplace.

The WHS risk management process involves four steps as set out in the [How to Manage WHS Risks Code of Practice](#) (see Figure), these are:

1. Identify hazards by finding out what could cause harm.
2. Assess risks by understanding the nature of the harm that could be caused, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening.
3. Control risks by implementing the most effective control measures that are reasonably practicable in the circumstances.
4. Review control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

A COVID-19 WHS Risk Register is an important tool to identify hazards and account for the management and control of COVID-19 risks.

## Resource

Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates:

- COVID-19 WHS Risk Register

## So far as is reasonably practicable

In the current COVID-19 circumstances, to decide if something is reasonably practicable, you need to consider the:

- likelihood of the risk occurring
- degree of harm that might result, and
- availability and suitability of a control measure.



# Work Management

Work Management is about identifying the risks associated with work areas and work activities to ensure effective controls are in place. High level controls for the management of work include stopping services where possible or introducing home-based work to eliminate the risk.

Other controls include monitoring access to work sites using a COVID-19 Visitor and Customer Sign-In Sheet and classifying the risk level of continuing services with standard or additional controls based on the work area or activity, such as access restrictions, reduced touch points, physical distancing and PPE.

## Resource

Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates:

- COVID-19 Safe Work Procedure
- COVID-19 Visitor and Customer Sign-In Sheet

## COVID-19 Risk Scenarios for Work Management

Using risk scenarios and questions for COVID-19 can help to understand and classify lower and higher risk COVID-19 work areas and work activities. Once a risk level is determined, the type and level of COVID-19 controls can be applied.

COVID-19 WHS risk assessment can be done using the COVID-19 WHS Risk Register or specific COVID-19 WHS risk assessments. Once COVID-19 controls have been determined these can be included in Safe Work Procedures or similar documentation to confirm with workers how COVID-19 risks will be managed during work.

### Is the work site a lower or higher COVID-19 risk?

Lower risk COVID-19 sites include:

- General office environment, limited contact with public
- Sites with COVID-19 health checks, social distancing, regular cleaning, hand washing facilities etc.
- Sites with no person/s tested COVID-19 positive in past 14 days or displaying symptoms

Standard COVID-19 Controls

Higher risk COVID-19 sites include:

- High public contact sites e.g. healthcare, retail
- Sites with no or limited COVID-19 controls
- Person/s tested COVID-19 positive or displaying symptoms
- Irregular cleaning regimes
- Distancing not sufficient (<1.5m)
- General disregard for COVID-19 management and controls.

Standard COVID-19 Controls + additional controls based on work scenario

# People Management

People Management combines the 'health' in health and safety and HR management. It involves identifying hazards that COVID-19 may present to your people and the risks your people may present to those they come in contact with through work.

People management includes identifying workers who may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 and removing them from direct exposure, such as through home-based working, and establishing protocols for workers who have been exposed to COVID-19, presenting with symptoms or travelled overseas in the past 14 days.

Procedures for responding to COVID-19 exposure should also be established, include processes for self-isolation, testing and contact tracing as directed by Public Health.

## Resource

Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates:

- COVID-19 Personnel Status Register
- COVID-19 Customer Site Visit Check

## COVID-19 Risk Scenarios for People Management

Using risk scenarios and questions for people management can help to understand and classify lower and higher risk personnel. Once a risk level is determined, the level of COVID-19 Controls can be applied.

This type of assessment should be done with the individual and recorded using a COVID-19 Personal Status Register to confirm personal arrangements.

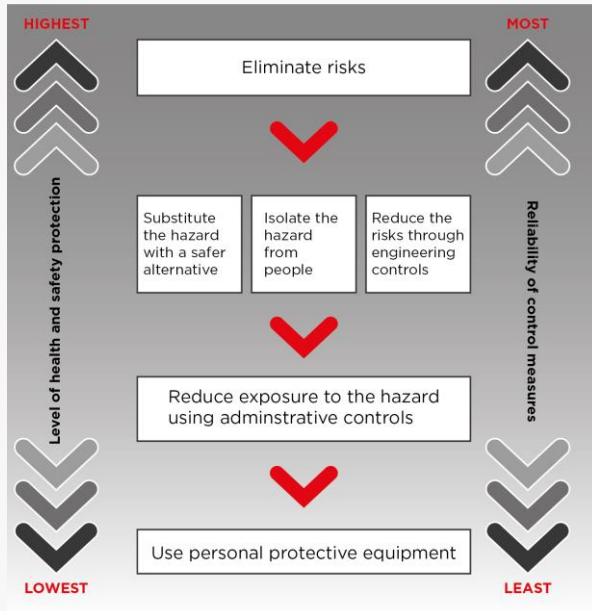
### Are personnel a lower or higher COVID-19 risk?

Lower risk COVID-19 personnel include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aged less than 65 years with no chronic medical conditions</li><li>• Generally fit and healthy with no compromised immune system</li><li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people less than 50 years and with no chronic medical condition</li></ul>	Standard COVID-19 Controls
Higher risk COVID-19 personnel include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People aged 65 years with chronic medical conditions</li><li>• People aged 70 years and older</li><li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical condition</li><li>• People with compromised immune systems</li></ul>	Controls based on work scenario and people needs

# Resource Management

Employers should ensure workplaces are properly resourced to manage COVID-19 WHS risks and, most importantly, check that the resources are being used.

The WHS hierarchy of control provides an important framework for determining what resources may be required for COVID-19 management.



## Facilities and Supplies

Employers also have an obligation to provide a work environment that is without risk to health and safety. This includes:

- Managing the work area and ensuring suitable resources for COVID-19
- Providing access to hygiene facilities such as soap, water and toilet paper
- Ensuring equipment is kept clean, properly stocked and in good working order.

If supplies necessary to provide a safe work environment can't be obtained, the business should consider whether workers should carry out work or work elsewhere, such as home-based work.

## Personal Protective Equipment

PPE for managing COVID-19 can include gloves, eye protection and face masks etc. For information about PPE including employer obligations, visit Safe Work Australia's [personal protective equipment](#) webpage. With demand for masks etc. high and PPE recognised as a 'last line of defence', business should consider higher measures or approaches to eliminate or minimise COVID-19 risk.

Where there is a need to provide workers with PPE to reduce COVID-19 exposure or contamination, the business should provide information and training on how to fit the PPE and use it effectively. The Australian Government Department of Health has published [general COVID-19 information on surgical masks and who should use them](#)

## Cleaning

Workplaces should already have in place a regular cleaning and waste removal schedule. To further reduce the risk of contamination and spread of COVID-19, consider increasing the frequency or concentration of cleaning relevant to the work areas and activities. Where workers are using PPE and cleaning equipment, ensure potentially COVID-19 contaminated items are disposed of correctly.

# Communications Management

Consultation with workers, their representatives and taking into account official information sources will be important for determining appropriate control measures.

It is important workers contribute to discussion and decisions on COVID-19 controls where they will continue with work and services. Employers must also ensure that direction and guidance to workers, customers, contractors, suppliers etc. is clear, unambiguous and kept up to date. Communications should ensure they know:

- When they need to stay away from a workplace and actions to take if they enter the work premises
- What to do if they come in contact with or develop symptoms of COVID-19
- Who to contact for information and discuss concerns

Provide your workers with the Safe Work Australia fact sheet Coronavirus (COVID-19) - [Work health and safety advice for workers](#).

## Resource

Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates:

- COVID-19 Info Sheet for Staff / COVID-19 Info Sheet for Customers
- COVID-19 Customer and

## Consultation

Employers must consult on WHS matters with workers who carry out work and who are (or likely to be) directly affected. This includes consulting with contractors, on-hire workers and volunteers about WHS decisions that directly affect them and which you influence or control.

Communications with customers is important to ensure both the health and safety of workers and the customer.



# HEALTH & WELLBEING

The outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted people in varying ways and many employers have recognised the importance of health and wellbeing for staff, whilst also addressing business continuity, services and performance.

Keeping fit and healthy is important for reducing the risks of contracting COVID-19 and reducing health complications. Exercise and lifestyle, nutrition and mental health are important elements for maintaining health and wellbeing for workers.

# Health and Wellbeing

Visit the Qld Government website for information on health and wellbeing:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy>



## Exercise & Lifestyle

Encourage employees to maintain regular exercise and lifestyle activities. Movement, stretching and good posture are important, particularly if work becomes sedentary with COVID-19 restrictions.



## Nutrition & Hydration

A healthy, balanced and nutritious diet promotes the immune system and should be encouraged. Plenty of fluids should also be encouraged (and going to the bathroom is a great way to keep moving).



## Mental Health & Support

Concerns, news and social isolation for COVID-19 can be stressful. Providing trusted information and support through HR processes, EAP and mental health programs will be important for your staff.

# RESPONDING TO ISSUES

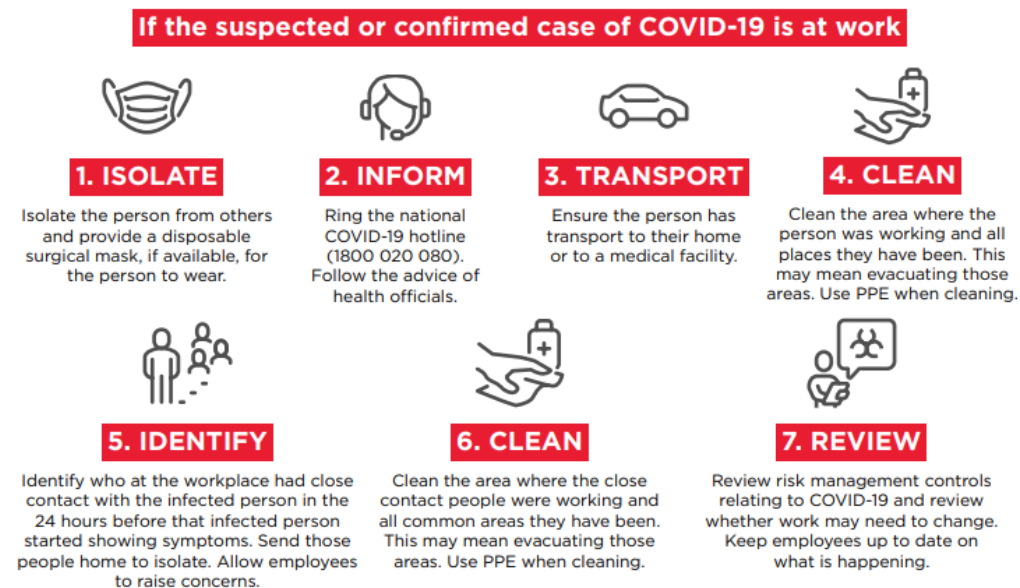
As part of your business COVID-19 control measures, arrangements should be established for responding to COVID-19 issues that may arise.

Key areas to consider are response to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, notifications of COVID-19 cases, reporting and workers compensation.

# Responding to Issues

## Suspected or Confirmed Cases

The following graphic is provided by Safe Work Australia for how to respond to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace.



Visit Safe Work Australia website for this Infographic [\*What to do if a worker has COVID-19\*](#)

## Notification

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, Queensland Health will be notified by the medical professional who confirms the diagnosis. WHSQld will respond to information received regarding potential non-compliance in workplaces and where necessary they will secure compliance where workers are exposed to unacceptable WHS risks, this includes COVID-19.

See the Safe Work Australia [\*WHS Incident Notification COVID-19 Factsheet\*](#) for other states and territories.

## Record Keeping

Employers should ensure a record of COVID-19 incidents and illnesses is maintained. This may take the form of a Register and kept in writing or electronic. Go to pages 24-25 of this Guide for details of the Kitney COVID-19 WHS templates, including a COVID-19 Personnel Status Register.

## Workers Compensation

In Qld, claims for COVID-19, will be assessed similar to other claims for viral diseases. There will need to be testing to confirm the worker has the virus and confirmation that the virus was contracted in the course of their employment and that employment was a significant contributing factor to the virus diagnosis. [\*WorkCover Qld\*](#) have a webpage with COVID-19 FAQ's.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



# Frequently Asked Questions



## 1. Where can I obtain COVID-19 work health and safety advice?

Current and objective COVID-19 WHS advice is important to make business and WHS decisions. Refer to [Safe Work Australia's webpage](#) for information on COVID-19 and WHS. [Workplace Health and Safety Qld's website](#) has information on COVID-19 workplace risk management.

## 2. Should my workers be wearing a face mask, gloves or other PPE?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is important to protect works where other 'higher' controls are not available or fully effective. Surgical masks and gloves are helpful in preventing the spread of COVID-19 however should be determined based on the particular work circumstances and potential exposure. For information about the use of masks visit the [WHSQ COVID-19 personal protective equipment webpage](#).

## 3. What cleaning should I do for work areas and equipment?

Cleaning and disinfecting is important for work areas and particularly communal areas such as kitchens, shared tools and equipment and where people suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection may have been. A number of useful fact sheets have been released, which should be referred to (listed below are examples). Specialist cleaning may be required for COVID-19 contamination.

- Australian Government:
  - [Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19](#)
  - [Cleaning and disinfection principles for health and residential care facilities for COVID-19](#)
- Queensland Government:
  - [Cleaning and disinfection of the environment where people suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection may have been](#)

# Frequently Asked Questions



## 4. Will WHS Inspectors be visiting workplace and enforcing compliance?

WHS Regulators, including WHSQ, recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has created an exceptional set of circumstances and will have significant impacts on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU). Compliance and enforcement activity will continue, however the focus will be on matters that pose serious risks to health and safety as well as advisory support. Read more about the [Regulatory Intent Statement](#) at the Safe Work Australia website.

## 5. Can staff use taxi's and ride share services?

Passenger transport remains an essential service to enable essential workers to get to and from their workplaces, as well as enabling other persons to access essential services such as health providers, pharmacies, supermarkets etc. Safe Work Australia has issued guidance on [minimizing the risk of exposure to COVID-19](#), which should be referred to for work controls.

## 6. What impact will COVID-19 claims have on my worker's compensation premium and will I need to pay an excess?

Workers with accepted claims for COVID-19 will have access to the same compensation entitlements that other workers with an accepted statutory claim have access to e.g. weekly compensation, medical and rehabilitation expenses, return to work support etc. As the employer, you will also be required to pay an excess i.e.. the first payment of weekly compensation. More information is available on the [Work Cover Queensland](#) website.

# COVID-19 WHS DOCUMENTS

COVID-19 WHS documents are important tools for a business and form part of the company's WHS management system.

Kitney are pleased to make available some COVID-19 WHS resources from the Kitney Toolkit to help businesses keep people and workplaces safe and healthy.

# COVID-19 WHS Documents

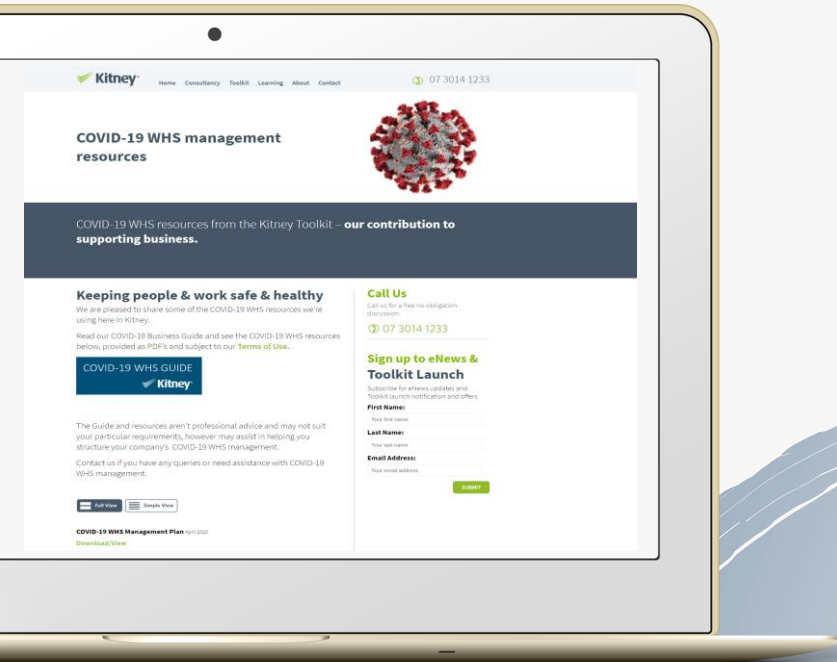
Kitney are pleased to make available some of the COVID-19 resources we're using for COVID-19 WHS management, provided subject to our [Terms of Use](#).

WHS resources aren't professional advice and may not suit your particular requirements however the PDF's may assist in helping you structure your company's COVID-19 WHS management. Contact us if you have any queries or need assistance.

- COVID-19 WHS Management Plan
- COVID-19 WHS Risk Register
- COVID-19 Safe Work Procedure
- COVID-19 Personnel Status Register
- COVID-19 Staff Information Sheet
- COVID-19 Customer Information Sheet
- COVID-19 Customer Site Visit Check
- COVID-19 Visitor and Contractor Sign-In Sheet

COVID-19 WHS documents are provided subject to our [Terms of Use](#)  
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<https://kitney.com/about/covid-19/>



Presented by Katrina Walton, Founder/Director, Wellness Designs and Jo Kitney, Director, Kitney OHS



## Q&A Blockbuster April 2020: Transitioning to the 'new normal' for workplace health, safety and wellness

### Outline:

As we navigate this period of uncertainty, there has certainly never been a more important time to come together as a workplace wellness community, check in with each other, and share current experiences. We will play a critical role both now, and into the future as workplaces renew and evolve following the COVID-19 pandemic. However the reality is – there is no playbook for this – and the best way to learn is from each other.

In this live call we are joined by special guest and Faculty member Jo Kitney, Director, Kitney OHS to discuss how we can best transition to the 'new normal' from a health, safety and wellness perspective. We answer questions including:

- How our members are going in these uncertain times

# COVID-19 Q&A

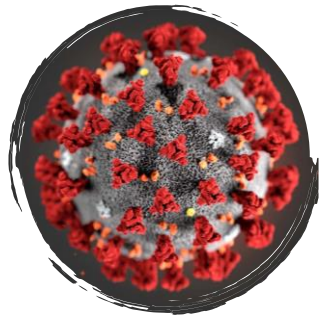
Hear Jo Kitney, Kitney's Director, talking with Katrina Walton from Wellness Designs in the [COVID-19 Q&A Blockbuster](#) about managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

[www.wellnessdesigns.com.au](http://www.wellnessdesigns.com.au)

# USEFUL LINKS

The following page has links to government and public health organization websites that have reliable up-to-date information about WHS management and the status of the COVID-19 in Australia and globally.

# Useful Links



## COVID-19

[Australian Government: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) health alert](#)

[World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)

[Queensland Government: Coronavirus updates for Queenslanders](#)

[Queensland Health: Self quarantine information](#)

[Queensland border restrictions](#)

[COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#)



## LEGISLATION

- [Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)
- [Safe Work Australia](#)
- [Code of Practice: Managing the work environment and facilities](#)



## SUPPORT

- [Work Cover Queensland COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [Lifeline](#): 13 11 14
- [Beyondblue](#): 1300 224 636
- [Workers' Psychological Support Service](#): 1800 370 732 or [info@wpss.org.au](mailto:info@wpss.org.au) (Queenslander's experiencing a work-related psychological injury support from a social worker)



# ABOUT KITNEY

[www.kitney.com](http://www.kitney.com)

Kitney is a market and thought leader in health, safety, quality and risk management. We provide professional and practical solutions for clients based on good practice, compliance and years of industry experience.

We strive to find innovative solutions and help businesses keep issues out of the too hard basket and managed through their business processes.

Our mission is to create safe, healthy and productive workplaces and for businesses to have a capable workforce that contributes to their vision and goals.

*Jo Kitney*



## Consultancy

Highly skilled and experienced consultants providing '**next gen**' specialist and general consultancy services. For start-ups, small, medium and large organisations across industries.



## Systems

From individual documents to cloud-based systems, we tailor solutions to meet business needs. The **Kitney Toolkit** is a comprehensive library of manuals, policies & procedures designed with business in mind.



## Learning

Respect for knowledge is one of our core values. We educate, mentor and coach business owners, managers and those working on health and safety to enable smart and informed business decisions.



We work with small, medium and large organisations in Queensland and across Australia at varying stages of business, from start-ups to well-established.

Our services reflect our years of experience and breadth of health, safety, quality and risk management experience at all levels of organisations.

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