Frequently Asked Questions
Working Remotely

These FAQs are designed to answer some of the questions you may have regarding Working Remotely.

General

My job can be done remotely but there are social and other benefits to working on site. Will admin/corporate staff have a choice about where they work?

We would certainly envisage that having some flexibility and choice where possible will be a feature of how we work into the future. Working remotely will not be suitable for all roles but is supported for roles where they can be completed remotely, safely and without operational or financial impact. Employees may have a variety of reasons to request a working remotely agreement, including but not limited to improving work-life balance, health reasons, to meet special project demands or to avoid disruptions in the workplace.

There is no one size fits all and working remotely arrangements need to take into consideration the functional operation of the team and Employee's personal circumstances.

Is there a timeframe for the Working Remotely project?

This is not a short term project – it has a medium term time frame, with a current foreseeable project schedule pushing out into the second quarter of next year. There is a lot of work to be completed, particularly relating to infrastructure. We will know more in the coming months once it has been fully scoped and budgeted, and we may be able to be clearer on timeframes at that point.

As this will take 12 months - can we adopt this principle now if we are able to?

There are many employees who continue to work remotely either fully or in a blended manner. We are now planning to enable remote working to continue for roles that can be undertaken safely and effectively offsite, and the arrangement works for both the employee and the organisation. While we expect there will be further refinement of policies and procedures relating to working remotely, we are effectively transitioning to a new way of working on a permanent basis. This is available now.

Given the Working Remotely project will run for 12 months are there any immediate baselines for hours that staff must come on site?

There are no immediate "baselines" that have been set. There is no one size fits all and working remotely arrangements need to take into consideration the functional operation of the team and Employee's personal circumstances.

Has hot desking been shown to be effective in terms of improving clinical practice and staff satisfaction?

The COVID-19 pandemic has required us to work in new ways. One of the changes we made was the introduction of remote working for those whose roles could be undertaken safely and effectively offsite.

This new way of working has been well-received and brings a wide range of benefits. Employees working remotely have told us they enjoy increased schedule flexibility, improved ability to focus, and reduced commuting issues, including parking, traffic and transport costs. In our most recent survey, 62% of employees reported an improved impact on wellbeing as a result of working remotely, with a further 30% reporting it as unchanged.

Remote working also provides benefits for our patients and the health service, such as increased space for clinical activity, reduced pressure on infrastructure, and improved sustainability.

We are now planning to enable remote working to continue for roles that can be undertaken safely and effectively offsite, and the arrangement works for both the employee and the organisation.

Where hot desking specifically is introduced, we will be sure to continue to engage with employees and to monitor and measure its effectiveness.

We have staff who want to work remotely from interstate and overseas. What is the Monash Health policy on this?

One of the key principles underlying the approach is that employees working remotely will be required to attend the workplace as required. Each situation is different, but this will be a key test. At present, employees need to be in Victoria. Requests may be considered for working remotely outside of Victoria may be considered for specific circumstances (e.g., caring for a sick relative), however this is something which should be raised with you manager.

You mentioned not working remotely overseas / interstate. Is working remotely from rural Victoria okay as long as you can still come into the office on agreed days?

Yes - that is the current position. One of the underlying principles is that employees working remotely will be required to attend the workplace as required.

Do we continue to work from home unless advised otherwise?

In general terms, yes, although this is something you are encouraged to discuss with your manager.

Is the Working Remotely agreement completed annually or a once off? If we completed the Working from home agreement last year, do we need to complete again?

You may have completed a Working from Home agreement when you were initially asked to work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You will now be required to complete the Working Remotely agreement which is more comprehensive and takes into account future workplace models which may include a mix of days working remotely and on-site. The Working

Remotely agreement should be completed and reviewed at least annually and more frequently if either parties' circumstances change.

Is childcare a reason for employees to remain working remotely and not come into the office?

Monash Health are now planning for remote working to continue as a blended model i.e. Employees working remotely will attend the workplace on a scheduled basis and as required by the manager for performance appraisals, collaboration, planning and team development activities. While Monash Health recognises the benefits of providing flexible working arrangements and supports working remotely where it is safe and practical to do so, providing childcare is not a reason to remain working remotely and not come on-site when requested by your manager.

Are our Enterprise Agreements going to include Working Remotely and reflect this flexibility?

Most of the current Enterprise agreements were developed prior to COVID-19 and thus do not cover working remotely. Monash Health are closely monitoring the relevant Enterprise agreements as they are renewed and will ensure our Policies and Procedure are updated accordingly and any changes communicated to employees.

Is there an allowance when working from home to cover the cost of utilities?

While Monash Health are working on providing a standardised equipment package for employees (e.g. laptop) this will not include an allowance to cover utilities. However, you may be eligible for Working from home deductions through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). These include: electricity expenses associated with heating, cooling and lighting the area from which you are working and running items you are using for work. Further information can be found via the following links:

https://www.ato.gov.au/General/Working-from-home-deductions-because-of-COVID-19---Easier-to-read-information/

https://www.ato.gov.au/General/COVID-19/Support-for-individuals-and-employees/Employees-working-from-home/?=QC63194

What should we do if our manager is against working remotely simply because they don't support it?

Managers are continuing to be advised on Working Remotely as the project advances, and more support and resources will be available in the coming weeks and months. If you feel uncomfortable in discussing your situation with your manager, please contact your People and Culture partner.

What support (well-being, morale) is available for teams that have been working from home now for over a year with minimal team engagement?

While most employees working remotely have identified many benefits including flexibility, less time spent on travel, etc, we recognise that for some employees/teams it has been difficult to maintain the same level of engagement, and this has consequently impacted well-being and

morale. A set of tips and resources have been developed to assist teams in managing this and are available on the Working Remotely webpage. The working remotely employee survey feedback further highlighted the need for our future workspaces to focus on social connection and more collaborative spaces for teams to engage when they come on-site and we have included this as part of our office re-design process.

IT and Tech Support

Is there going to be an arrangement where staff can personally purchase laptops/IT equip with the current MH technology hardware supplier

The IT team is currently working on a standardised equipment package for employees. The recent employee survey data provided valuable information regarding desired IT support and the working group is incorporating this information into its approach. This will be communicated at a later date.

When are we moving from Webex to Microsoft Teams?

An update on the transition to the Microsoft 365 platform will be provided in the coming weeks.

Will extensive training opportunities be provided when Microsoft 365 is rolled out?

Yes – an extensive range of training programs will be implemented as part of the transition to Microsoft 365.

If utilising a private phone for work, can people be mindful of work/life balance and not call after hours?

Monash Health acknowledges that working remotely can at times blur the lines between home and work life; disrupting the work life balance. Employees and managers are encouraged to refer to the Health and Wellbeing page on the Monash Health Intranet for tips and guidance to assist with these concerns.

How are staff able to make arrangements for working from home when asked, however unfortunately do not have a personal laptop or PC?

The IT working group is currently working on a standardised equipment package for employees, and this will be communicated at a later date. In the short term, please discuss this with your manager and we will see if an arrangement can be made.

Hot Desks

How will hot desks be made available if PCs used for remote desktop access by those working remotely?

As part of the Working Remotely project, there are a large number of challenges such as this which will need to be resolved. An IT working group has been established to develop solutions for that work best for our environment and more information will be known in the coming months.

How do you address concerns with employees returning from remote working who previously had offices will now have to use hot desks?

Into the future, there is likely to be some reconfiguration of office spaces at some locations, and in some cases, this may mean permanently allocated desks are not available for all employees, particularly where they choose to work in a blended model. If we are to create more space for clinical work, this is one of the changes that will need to be implemented.

It is too early to determine the specific arrangements each employee or area will have, other than we will consult with each key area to ensure that an appropriate workspace is available for those who require it.

If we move to hot desks, we will need an easy system of booking a desk.

We are extremely conscious that there will be a wide range of systems such as desk booking systems which will be required as part of moving to a new way of working on a permanent basis.

With demand on desks can staff have permanent allocated lockers for suitable space to leave things and not have to carry everything in each day?

We are currently scoping the necessary supports for employees which will be required. This includes infrastructure needs such as lockers.

There should be open-bookable hot desks in the major hubs like Casey and MMC, so that we can work while attending meetings & training.

We agree, and are currently investigating pilot spaces at key sites, so that such facilities can be made available into the future. Some areas are already available. Please check the Working Remotely webpage for details.

How is hot desking COVID safe?

Monash Health is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees. In establishing any hot desking arrangements, we will consult closely with our own Infection Prevention team, as well as taking into account Department of Health and Worksafe requirements and recommendations for COVID-safe workplaces.

Infrastructure

Is sound proofing going to be considered for offices now with so much more Webex?

In general, we would anticipate there will be a greater focus on use of headsets as a means of reducing noise, rather than soundproofing of offices. Where new office areas are created or renovated, we will consider the most appropriate noise reducing technology.

Sitting in an open plan office it is very difficult to concentrate at times due to others on the phone. Can partitions and sound proofing be considered?

We are consulting with design experts, and would expect that where new office areas are created or renovated, we will seek to incorporate best practice design, which would take into account layout, acoustics, ventilation and best use of natural light among many other things.

As buildings are being leased for admin staff is working remotely no longer an option?

Not at all – Monash Health supports working remotely and recognises the benefits for those whose role can be undertaken safely and effectively remotely. Remote working also provides benefits for our patients and the health service, such as increased space for clinical activity, reduced pressure on infrastructure, and improved sustainability.

If you have any further questions, please email: WorkingRemotely@monashhealth.org