COVID-19 Safe Workplace Principles

The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency which calls upon all businesses and workers to follow the principles and measures implemented by governments through the National Cabinet process.

The Principles

1. All workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic requires a uniquely focused approach to work health and safety (WHS) as it applies to businesses, workers and others in the workplace.

3. To keep our workplaces healthy and safe, businesses must, in consultation with workers, and their representatives, assess the way they work to identify, understand and quantify risks and to implement and review control measures to address those risks.

4. As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, businesses, workers and other duty holders must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices, consistent with advice from health authorities, to ensure their workplaces are ready for the social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures that will be an important part of the transition.

5. Businesses and workers must actively control against the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the latest advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), including considering the application of a hierarchy of appropriate controls where relevant.

6. Businesses and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with advice from health authorities.

7. Existing state and territory jurisdiction of WHS compliance and enforcement remains critical. While acknowledging that individual variations across WHS laws mean approaches in different parts of the country may vary, to ensure business and worker confidence, a commitment to a consistent national approach is key. This includes a commitment to communicating what constitutes best practice in prevention, mitigation and response to the risks presented by COVID-19.

8. States and Territories ultimately have the role of providing advice, education, compliance and enforcement of WHS in fulfilling their statutory functions.