



**WORKPLACE
CLEARANCE
GROUP**

WPCG Newsletter: Edition 3, March 2020

Welcome to the third edition of the Work Place Clearance Group (WPCG) Newsletter. This newsletter is focussed solely on the impact of the current COVID-19 outbreak. We hope you find this to be a useful resource.

As has been widely communicated throughout the media, the coronavirus outbreak is now a global pandemic and the number of people affected is rising fast throughout the world, including Australia. Our thoughts are with you all and your families in what are unprecedented times in Australia. We wish those directly affected a full and speedy recovery.

During this time, you, your family or people you know may experience feelings of anxiety, distress and concern in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19). [Beyondblue.org.au](https://www.beyondblue.org.au) can provide support and advice, they can also help you identify other [resources](#) where you can get support.

We know you will all be watching how fast this situation is evolving and it is easy to become overwhelmed by the amount of information and the rate of change. We have attempted here to put together some key links to the primary sources of data of relevance to you all at work and home so that you can be informed with the right information to make decisions for your workplace, and to take care of yourself at home.

This is an extremely challenging time for all of us. It is a time to look out for each other. Be mindful of the mental health as well as physical effects on each other of the outbreak, and the potential to be distracted at work or on the road.

At present WPCG is continuing to operate. Our phone and email services remain open. Our online courses continue to function and we currently plan to continue face to face training and Permit Officer Assessments. We are working on contingencies in the event that courses need to be suspended in the future. Please reach out to us if you have particular needs or concerns regarding WPCG training in the coming weeks and months.

Contact us:

E-Mail: enquiries@wpcg.com.au

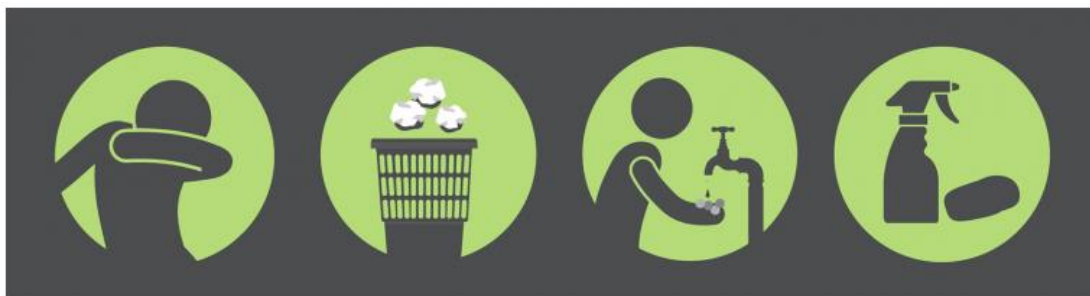
Phone: (03) 9399 8002

Website: www.wpcg.com.au

We welcome the input and feedback from contractors using the WPCG system as we want this newsletter to be of value to you and your workforce, with the primary objective that it helps support workplace health and safety.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert: Federal Government Information

The World Health Organization has announced that COVID-19 is a pandemic. The central resource to find out how the government are monitoring and responding to the outbreak, how you can help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Australia, and what to do if you have symptoms is found at www.health.gov.au. The government also report the latest official medical advice and case numbers on this site which is regularly updated as the situation and status of knowledge evolves.



You can find key information on topics such as:

- how to protect yourself and others;
- symptoms and when to get tested;
- who to contact if you are concerned; and
- additional advice for travellers, and health and aged care sectors.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice for Workplaces

Impacts already being seen include restricted availability of PPE, particularly masks and disposable overalls. Future impacts may include delayed response of emergency services or medical facilities relied upon in emergency plans at work sites. This should be considered in work planning, particularly of work meeting the legal definition of high risk construction work.

The [Safe Work Australia website](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-pcbus) is an excellent resource to help workplaces and has been updated with a specific page to advise businesses: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-pcbus

This above page covers topics such as:

- What should a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) do to protect workers and others at a workplace?
- When can a PCBU direct a worker to stay away from their usual place of work under the model WHS laws?
- What else should a PCBU take into account when deciding whether a worker or other people need to stay away from their usual place of work?
- Do I have to consult my workers about measures I put in place to minimise the risk of COVID-19?
- Do workers or other people need to comply with a direction from a PCBU to stay away from their usual place of work?
- Can a worker refuse to come to work?
- Workers' Compensation and COVID-19

It also has links to specifically relevant information from WHS regulators and workers' compensation authorities around the country, including but not limited to:

- [WorkSafe Victoria - Preparing for pandemics](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/Preparing-for-pandemics)

- [WorkCover QLD- Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) workplace risk management](#)
 - [NSW Health - Coronavirus FAQs](#)
 - [Australian Council of Trade Unions - Coronavirus updates](#)
 - [WHO: Coronavirus disease advice for the public – Myth busters](#)
-

Checklist for individuals and families

As a family, you can plan and make decisions now that will protect you and your family during a COVID-19 outbreak. Creating a household plan can help protect your health and the health of those you care about in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has a checklist to help you take steps to plan and protect the health of you and your family. This is available [online](#) and includes guidance on:

- Planning ahead to be ready
 - Cleaning and disinfection recommendations
 - Checklist to get your household ready
 - What to do if you are sick
 - FAQ
-

Business Continuity Plans

Many businesses will be concerned about business continuity and financial impacts. A sound Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is important. There are some resources available to support the generation of a BCP if you wish to update it considering the outbreak, or don't already have one for your business. These include:

- <https://www.victorianchamber.com.au/business-support/crisis-information/covid-19-coronavirus-resources>
 - <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/preparing-pandemic-guide-employers>
 - <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/protecting-business/risk-management/continuity-planning/plan>
-

Mobile Devices

Currently some contractor groups manage their WPCG requirements on their mobile devices (iPads, smartphones, Samsung tablets etc).

An issue arises where attending contractors are required to hand over their mobile device to the site operator to sign to acknowledge the contractor has discussed the work to be undertaken. Clearly, this is a potential cross-contamination mechanism for COVID-19.

How can you prevent or minimise cross-contamination via mobile devices?

In line with other WPCG member communications **please enact the following measures immediately:**

- When using the WPCG system either Work Clearance or Work Permit on your device, where relevant, the attending contractor/permit officer is to complete the "Site Operator/ Manager Name" field and place an X or type in the name again, in the "Site Operator/ Manager Signature" field. This must be

shown to the Site Representative at a distance; do not hand your device over, who must then verbally agree the work and the associated hazards has been discussed with them.

- When the WPCG job is completed and the contractor/permit officer is signing out, the attending contractor/permit officer is to complete the "Site Operator/ Manager Name (PRINT)" field and place an X or type in the name again, in the "Site Operator/ Manager Signature" field. This must be shown to the Site Operator/ Manager, at a distance; do not hand your device over, who must then agree the works completed and any potential impact to the site have been discussed with them.

NOTE:

- The above is being communicated to the sites, however, as the situation is rapidly evolving, there may be circumstances where attending contractors/permit officers come across site representatives that are unaware of the above measures. Please be patient and take the time to explain the situation to them and suggest they contact their Manager should they have any reservations or questions.
- Please make yourselves aware of your respective company policies and procedures to protect you, your colleagues, the site teams and our customers from potential cross-contamination and follow those directions diligently.