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ATTACHMENT ONE. Telecommuting (home-based work) guidelines

1 PURPOSE

To outline arrangements for the management of telecommuting in Queensland Health.

2 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all permanent and temporary Queensland Health employees.

3 GUIDELINES

Guidelines may be developed to facilitate implementation of this policy. The guidelines must be consistent with this policy.

4 DELEGATION

The 'delegate' is as listed in the Queensland Health Human Resource Delegations Manual as amended from time to time.

5 REFERENCES

- Queensland Public Health Sector Certified Agreement (No.7) 2008
- *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*
- Queensland Health Code of Conduct
- HR Management Delegation Manual
- Queensland Health OneLook Desktop Standing Offer Arrangements
- Indemnity for Employees and Other Persons HR Policy
- Policy 9379 (V1.00) – Usage of Internet and Email Services

6 SUPERSEDES

- IRM 3.10-3 Telecommuting – Arrangements for Home-Based Work During Prescribed Hours of Work

7 POLICY

Queensland Health is committed to the development and implementation of flexible work arrangements. The flexible work arrangement of telecommuting is supported by Queensland Health and contributes to a positive and productive work environment.

7.1 Objectives

This policy may apply to short and long term telecommuting (home-based work) arrangements. Arrangements are negotiated between individual employees and relevant managers and are subject to the approval of the Director-General (or delegate).

The key objectives of the policy are to:

- provide greater workplace flexibility within operational requirements for management and employees within Queensland Health

- recognise the importance of balancing work and family responsibilities and improving organisational outcomes, productivity and employee satisfaction
- attract and retain a highly skilled workforce.

7.2 Conditions of employment

Existing conditions of employment continue to apply unless otherwise specified. A telecommuting employee's spread of hours may be varied by mutual agreement with their manager. Hours of work are not to exceed the hours prescribed in the relevant Award and Agreement.

7.3 Key principles

Telecommuting arrangements are on a voluntary basis and:

- agreed between an individual employee and their manager
- the approval of the Director-General (or delegate) is required
- is neither an employee right nor an obligation that can be imposed on an employee, unless it is specified as a condition of employment.

Client service and patient care are not to be compromised as a result of telecommuting arrangements. Telecommuting is not to be used by an employee as a substitute for child care or dependent care. Appropriate arrangements for care are to be made.

Telecommuting arrangements are generally not to exceed three consecutive working days per week. At least two working days per week are to be spent at the telecommuter's primary workplace or office as identified by the manager.

Provision and maintenance of computer equipment to telecommuters for official use is to be undertaken in accordance with relevant corporate policies. The issue of whether computer equipment is to be provided to the telecommuter is included in section 7.8.

7.4 Employee and role suitability

Individual employees are to be assessed by their manager regarding their suitability for a telecommuting arrangement. The nature of the work to be performed is assessed to determine suitability for telecommuting. It may enhance productivity for some roles to be performed when the employee is telecommuting.

Work requiring one or more of the following conditions is not suitable for telecommuting:

- A high degree of supervision.
- Frequent direct client face to face contact.
- Frequent access to physical resources within the primary workplace.
- Full-time training responsibilities.
- Team-based work that demands face to face contact with other staff and which is not appropriate to be conducted in a home office.

7.5 Workplace health and safety

Under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, employers have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of each employee. This obligation includes employees who telecommute.

A workplace health and safety assessment is to be completed before a telecommuting agreement is finalised (refer attachment one).

7.6 Workers' compensation

Telecommuting employees have workers' compensation and rehabilitation coverage under the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*.

To ensure WorkCover protection, a telecommuting (home-based work) agreement is to be completed in accordance with the guidelines (attachment one).

7.7 Information technology

When telecommuting requires the use of computer equipment, information technology requirements to perform the specified work from home are to be assessed by the manager. Managers are to consider the financial implications of providing appropriate computer equipment before any arrangements are entered into.

Managers are responsible for determining the computer equipment to be issued for the purposes of telecommuting. Computers are to be issued in accordance with the Queensland Health OneLook Desktop Standing Offer Arrangements (subject to change from time to time). Managers and telecommuters are to liaise with their local Information Services Unit on the issuing of computers.

Employees are not to be issued with additional mobile telephones for the purpose of home-based telecommuting.

7.8 Insurance

Queensland Health (the 'Crown') provides indemnity for all health service employees provided the employee has diligently and conscientiously endeavoured to carry out the duty or function. Refer Indemnity for Employees and Other Persons HR Policy.

Public service employees of Queensland Health are entitled to be indemnified in accordance with the whole of government indemnity arrangement stated in Cabinet Decision No 37501 in 1982.

Telecommuting employees are responsible for ensuring adequate public liability insurance. These employees have a responsibility to check with their insurance provider to determine whether their policy is still valid under the telecommuting arrangements. A higher premium may be required by the insurance company to cover such circumstances. The telecommuter is to be required to maintain that policy for the duration of the telecommuting agreement.

The telecommuter may from time to time be required to provide evidence that the policy has not expired or been terminated. Telecommuters are responsible for

ensuring adequate building and home contents insurance. Queensland Health accepts no responsibility for any damage to a telecommuter's personal property that has been caused by Queensland Health assets or otherwise.

8 APPLYING THE POLICY

Telecommuting is a voluntary arrangement. Employees seeking a telecommuting arrangement are to apply in accordance with the Queensland Health telecommuting (home-based work) guidelines (attachment one).

8.1 Approval

Implementation of telecommuting arrangements are subject to the suitability of the work to a telecommuting arrangement and the operational needs of the work unit. Approval is at the sole discretion of the Director-General (or delegate).

The telecommuter and their manager are to sign a telecommuting agreement detailing all working arrangements and conditions. Final approval/non-approval is at the discretion of the Director-General (or delegate). Telecommuting agreements are to be in accordance with the Queensland Health telecommuting (home-based work) guidelines (attachment one).

8.2 Information technology and asset loan approval

8.2.1 Asset loan approval

In addition to normal requirements for asset loans, a telecommuting (home-based work) asset loan approval form is to be completed in accordance with the Queensland Health telecommuting (home-based work) guidelines (attachment one).

8.3 Technical support for Queensland Health equipment

Queensland Health equipment is to be returned to the telecommuter's primary workplace for maintenance and repair work. Queensland Health is to provide helpdesk support and services including installation, troubleshooting and fault recording.

The above arrangements for technical support (including maintenance and repairs) may be varied in exceptional circumstances only. The varied arrangements are to be clearly documented on appropriate Queensland Health files and authorised by the relevant district CEO (or delegate).

8.4 Remote access

When employees participating in approved telecommuting arrangements require access to Queensland Health network resources, prior approval is to be obtained via the remote access service.

Not all telecommuting arrangements require remote access to Queensland Health network resources. When remote access is used, the remote access service is the only recognised electronic security protocol for external access to information held on Queensland Health network resources. Remote access is to be via standard telephone lines, i.e. remote access is not to be provided via a mobile telephone.

Relevant information kits may be obtained by contacting local information services units.

8.5 Usage of internet and email services

Queensland Health internet and email services are to be used by authorised users only. Usage is to be in accordance with the provisions of Policy 9379 (V1.00) – Usage of Internet and Email Services.

8.6 Workers' compensation

Any injuries that occur during a telecommuting day are to be reported immediately to the relevant manager. Appropriate workplace health and safety procedures are to be applied.

A daily work diary is to be maintained and regularly updated during each home-based telecommuting day. The telecommuting (home-based work) daily work diary form is to be used. The diary accounts for all significant movements and activities during the course of a telecommuting day for workers' compensation and management information purposes.

9 DEFINITIONS

Home-based telecommuting	The agreed regular performance of part of an employee's ordinary hours of duty at a home-based office during prescribed hours of work, using information technology and telecommunications as a substitute for commuting to the primary workplace. When telecommuting is referred to in this policy it is home-based work.
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10 HISTORY

October 2009	Amended telecommuting (home-based work) agreement to update the mandatory documents to be submitted for records management.
April 2008	Developed as a result of the HR policy consolidation framework.

Telecommuting (home-based work) guidelines

Telecommuting is a voluntary arrangement. Prior to applying to telecommute, individual employees are to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Telecommuting HR Policy C5.

Employees seeking a telecommuting arrangement with Queensland Health are to make application in accordance with the following process. Relevant forms can be found on QHEPS under HR forms (link alongside Telecommuting HR Policy C5).

PART 1 Application process for individual employees

Step 1 Employee to complete application to telecommute (home-based work) form

Employees wanting to be considered for acceptance into a telecommuting arrangement with Queensland Health are to apply to their manager on the designated form.

The application to telecommute is to be submitted to the applicant's manager, together with relevant additional and supporting information/documentation, including:

- Documentation concerning objectives/projects to be completed as part of the telecommuting arrangements.
- Appropriate third party indemnity cover from applicant's insurer.
- Any additional and supporting information/documentation.

Suitability checklist

The type of work to be performed and the employee's suitability are to be considered when deciding whether telecommuting arrangements are appropriate for the work unit.

Applicants are to complete the suitability checklist addressing work and individual employee requirements to ensure effective and equitable implementation of any telecommuting arrangements.

Step 2 Manager assesses telecommuting (home-based work) application

Each work situation is to be considered on its own merits in relation to its suitability for telecommuting. The manager is to assess whether the type of work to be performed by the employee is compatible to a telecommuting arrangement. Managers are to be guided in their decisions by operational effectiveness, workplace efficiency and workplace health and safety, giving consideration to the following:

- Does the type of work lend itself to telecommuting?
- Is the potential telecommuter able to work well on their own and achieve set goals without face-to-face monitoring?
- How is this agreement to impact on the team and the required work outputs?
- Is the telecommuting (home-based work) workplace (i.e. home office) environment a safe, secure and distraction free place to work?

Applicants and their manager are to determine whether additional local requirements apply. If such requirements are identified, they are to be documented and used in conjunction with

the application to telecommute (home-based work) form, and included in the formal telecommuting agreement, to be signed by both the individual and the CEO or approved delegate. Examples of local requirements might include hours of work or the necessity for the telecommuter to be available to travel to the primary workplace at short notice if required.

Employees who may be considered for telecommuting include those who:

- are self motivated and can work independently without direct supervision
- have a demonstrated record of satisfactory work performance in their current role
- can prioritise work requirements, plan daily activities and meet deadlines
- are trustworthy, reliable and responsible
- are capable of managing risk.

Step 3 Workplace health and safety officer (WHSO) to complete assessment checklist report

To ensure compliance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, a workplace health and safety assessment is to be completed prior to formalising any telecommuting agreement. This is only to relate to the area where work is to be performed. The workplace health and safety assessment may be undertaken by the workplace health and safety officer (WHSO) responsible to the work unit.

Telecommuters are to ensure equipment and furniture in the home office meets minimum workplace health and safety requirements relevant to the job being done. For example, if this is office work, the workstation used is to be ergonomically correct. If machinery is used, the controls are to be clearly marked and properly positioned.

If the proposed telecommuting workplace does not substantially pass the safety assessment, a telecommuting (home-based work) agreement is not to be entered into. The definition of substantially pass is at the discretion of the relevant manager, who may seek advice from workplace health and safety personnel when necessary.

When a proposed telecommuting workplace does not substantially pass a workplace health and safety assessment, the telecommuter bears responsibility for any improvements or adaptations required in order to comply. Queensland Health will not accept any responsibility for the maintenance and/or upgrade of the potential workplace.

To ensure continued compliance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, assessments are also to be conducted on a periodic basis or when there is a change in circumstances (e.g. reported work injury, renovations/changes to the telecommuting workplace).

PART 2 When the manager supports a telecommuting application

Step 4 Telecommuter and manager to develop and sign telecommuting (home-based work) agreement

Once an application to telecommute is supported by the manager, the next step is to complete a telecommuting agreement. The telecommuting agreement requires the development of all working arrangements which are to apply for the life of the agreement.

Additional local requirements which are negotiated separately are to be included in this agreement.

Prior to implementation, the agreement is to be submitted to the district CEO (or delegate) for consideration and final approval/non-approval.

Conditions of employment

Relevant conditions of employment are to continue to be maintained in accordance with the provisions of applicable legislation, Awards, industrial agreements and Certified Agreements.

Telecommuting does not alter an employee's Award conditions or entitlements. Authorised telecommuters are to be subject to the same work responsibilities, policies, employment terms and conditions and legislative requirements that are applicable in the primary workplace.

An employee's spread of hours may be varied by mutual agreement between the telecommuter and their manager, however hours are not to exceed prescribed Award hours. All employees engaged in telecommuting are to maintain a timesheet to record their hours of work, which is to be submitted on a regular basis.

Expenses

- Consumables are to be documented as part of the telecommuting agreement and, whenever possible, provided from within the relevant work unit's existing resources and stocks.
- The telecommuter is to be responsible for utility expenses incurred at the home-based office. These include expenses associated with heating, electricity and water.
- A telecommunications record is to be maintained for each home-based telecommuting day (refer telecommuting (home-based work) telecommunications record form). The telecommunications record accounts for all connections made to the Queensland Health network via the approved remote access service, as well as all telephone calls made, and support any claims for reimbursement of communication expenses.
- A record is to be kept of all communication costs for which reimbursement is sought.
- Approved communication expenses associated with work performed for Queensland Health are to be met by the telecommuter's work unit (e.g. call costs which have been documented in the required telecommunications record format).

Equity

- No member of a work team/unit, whether or not covered by a telecommuting agreement, is to be discriminated against in any way as a result of a telecommuting arrangement. This includes access to entitlements, training and career development and work group information.
- When appropriate, a clause providing for temporary suspension of the telecommuting agreement may be incorporated for reasons such as higher duties relief and development opportunities.

Asset loan approval

When Queensland Health accepts responsibility for the provision and maintenance of appropriate computer equipment to telecommuters for official use, this is to be undertaken in accordance with relevant corporate policies.

A telecommuting (home-based work) asset loan approval form is to be completed and attached to the telecommuting (home-based work) agreement when relevant.

Equipment such as fixed lights, electrical sockets etc. are the responsibility of the home owner/telecommuter.

Step 5 Manager to inform work team/unit of any telecommuting (home-based work) arrangements

Managers are to ensure all employees within work teams involved in telecommuting are adequately prepared to deal with issues relating to telecommuting and their potential to adversely impact upon the work unit. For example, disrupted links with colleagues, concerns of staff remaining in the traditional workplace, reorganisation of communication, redesign of work practices, accommodating client expectations and cultural and mindset changes.

For telecommuting to succeed, both managers and employees are to have a sound working knowledge of the basic principles for telecommuting. Managers are to ensure **all** employees in the work unit understand the agreed telecommuting process, roles, functions and responsibilities.

Step 6 Telecommuter and manager to develop agreed performance goals and outcomes (telecommuting (home-based work) work management strategy form)

Managers and telecommuters are to agree on clear performance goals for each project/work period. These are to be supported by both qualitative and quantitative indicators which can be evaluated against an agreed set of outcomes, including:

- specific targets, objectives and work plans
- performance criteria to measure work outputs
- project management principles and schedules
- communication strategies
- regular progress reports.

Step 7 Manager to develop and implement agreed communication strategies (communication strategy form)

Strategies and arrangements are to be developed, agreed and implemented for communication between relevant managers, work teams and telecommuters.

Employees in a telecommuting agreement may experience isolation from the primary workplace environment, and as a result reduced communication with managers and the work unit/team. In order to ensure the telecommuter remains an integral part of the work unit, managers are to ensure the following strategies are considered when completing the communication strategy form as an attachment to a telecommuting agreement:

- Agreed methods of communication (facsimile, telephone, email etc).
- Planned timing and frequency of communication.
- Shared organisational communication (access to gazettes, circulars, corporate emails etc).
- Agreed and programmed timing of unit/team meetings including the physical presence of the telecommuter.

- Social interaction with the team. The telecommuter is not to be intentionally excluded from normal workplace functions or meetings.

Step 8 Security and insurance issues

Security

Security of equipment, assets, information, confidentiality and copyright is to be in accordance with organisational policy and documented in the telecommuting agreement.

- Individual employees who gain access to Queensland Health equipment for the purposes of telecommuting are required to provide an adequate level of security for the equipment.
- An employee is to convince the manager that sufficient security exists within the telecommuting workplace (i.e. home office) to protect and secure equipment and information from unauthorised use and access. Security precautions can include, but are not limited to, appropriate security on windows and external doors, and instructions to family members on access to the computer or workstation.
- Employees are to abide by the requirements of the current Queensland Health Code of Conduct.
- The nature and confidentiality of documentation available for work away from the primary workplace is to be detailed as part of the agreement. This may also form part of the selection process, i.e. does the inability to access certain information (physical files) make it difficult to achieve the prescribed work goals?

Indemnity and public liability insurance

This is to be in accordance with the Indemnity for Employees and Other Persons HR Policy.

Queensland Health is not to accept responsibility for any damage to a telecommuter's personal property that has been caused by the use of Queensland Health equipment or assets or otherwise.

Step 9 Telecommuter to seek independent advice in relation to taxation

Under certain circumstances, use of part of a home for business purposes may entitle employees to claim certain rebates/deductions on expenses relevant to telecommuting. Queensland Health accepts no responsibility in this regard.

Telecommuters are responsible for seeking independent advice relevant to their personal and individual circumstances.

Step 10 Delegate approval

Telecommuting agreements are to be submitted for consideration to the appropriate officer as delegated under the relevant HR Management Delegation Manual.

Step 11 Retention of documentation

When a telecommuting agreement is approved, a copy is to be forwarded to the relevant HR management unit for appropriate retention.