



**Policy Title:**                    **WORKING FROM HOME POLICY**

**Policy Type:**                    **HUMAN RESOURCES**  
 (Statutory, Financial, Administrative, Human Resources)

**Policy Number:**            **HR031**

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## 1. Policy Background/Scope

Aurukun Shire Council (“ASC”) acknowledges that working from home arrangements may be appropriate for certain positions and in certain circumstances.

It is important that working from home arrangements are consistent with the needs of ASC and do not adversely affect other employees.

## 2. Definitions

“**Working from home**” is working away from ASC’s workplace.

“**Home office**” is a designated space for an employee to work while at home.

## 3. Working from Home Arrangements

Working from home at ASC involves working away from the normal work base for a period of time. Only in exceptional circumstances will ASC permit an employee to permanently work from home.

During the time any employee is working from home, contact is to be maintained with ASC via electronic means, such as email, hand held communication device and telephone.

Each working from home arrangement is a cooperative arrangement between ASC and the employee. ASC has the discretion to offer working from home to an employee where it is appropriate in the circumstances.

Employees can also apply to work from home, but ASC reserves the right to refuse an application where it is inappropriate in the circumstances.

## 4. Eligibility Criteria

Not all employees or all positions are suited to working from home arrangements. For this reason, employees will be offered working from home on the basis of their suitability.

Employees who apply to work from home should be prepared to show their suitability.

The essential criteria for working from home include (but are not limited to) the following:

- a) a high level of computer literacy;
- b) the work is able to be performed off-site, for example:
  - (i) data entry (without the need for removal of ASC’s paper based records)
  - (ii) engineering and design
  - (iii) research and development
  - (iv) drafting
  - (v) computer design and programming
  - (vi) sales;
- c) the presence of the skills, ability and knowledge to work autonomously; and
- d) an appropriate and safe workspace at home.

Working from home will generally not be considered suitable for:

- a) work that requires a high degree of supervision or monitoring;
- b) projects that involve a large amount of teamwork and daily face-to-face contact with other employees;
- c) positions that carry responsibilities for training or supervising others; or
- d) positions where the employee has little control over the flow of work.

An employee must also be able to demonstrate that:

- a) efficiency will be maintained or increased as a result of the arrangement;
- b) the productivity of an employee's team or work group must not be adversely affected;
- c) the level of customer/client service will be maintained or increased; and
- d) home commitments will not detract from the performance of the work.

## **5. Working from Home Part-Time**

Where a working from home arrangement is approved, it will in most cases be on a part-time basis. Part of the arrangement will involve an employee and the relevant manager agreeing on the number of hours or days that the employee can spend away from the office.

## **6. Working from Home is not an Entitlement**

Employees should be aware that working from home is not a formal employee benefit or entitlement and that ASC maintains at all times the right to terminate a working from home arrangement.

## **7. Conditions of Working from Home**

The following conditions apply to employees who work from home:

- a) All work must be for specific tasks approved by the supervisor.
- b) The employee must provide work reports and attendance records as proof of work completed.
- c) The employee is to be contactable during their agreed hours of work.
- d) ASC retains the right of access to the employee's home during their agreed hours of work.

Subject to prior agreement between the employee and ASC, on-site visits or inspections by officers of ASC may be made for work-related matters, such as supervision, collection and delivery of work, equipment maintenance, security or workplace health and safety assessment, and retrieval of equipment.

## **8. Particular Requirements for Working from Home**

Employees must designate a space for working while they are at home. This space could be a particular room (for example, a study) or a particular area of a room. The "**Home Office**" should have a desk and sufficient space to perform work. Employees should not work in any area of their home, other than the Home Office.

## **9. Employees' Responsibilities in Relation to Workplace Health and Safety**

Employees are responsible for ensuring a safe working environment. They must maintain the Home Office and other relevant areas (including the entrance, bathroom and kitchen) in a safe condition at all times. Employees must allow a person, appointed by ASC, to have access to their Home Office and related areas from time to time to allow them to conduct safety inspections.

Employees must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and the health and safety of other persons who enter their home during work hours. Employees must notify ASC immediately if they become aware of any change in their working conditions or arrangement, or any risk to health and safety. Notification should be made in accordance with ASC's Workplace Health and Safety Policy.

## **10. Workplace Health and Safety Inspection**

A workplace health and safety inspection will be conducted for all working from home arrangements. As a condition of granting an employee permission to work from home, they must allow a person, appointed by ASC, to conduct a safety inspection of the Home Office, plus any other areas that may be used while working, for example, the home entrance, bathroom and kitchen. The purpose of the safety inspection is to determine whether the employee will be exposed to risk of injury or illness while performing work at home. Unless the risk can be minimised or eradicated to the satisfaction of ASC, the arrangement will not be approved or will be discontinued.

Where it is not practical to conduct a workplace health and safety inspection for an occasional working from home arrangement, a workplace health and safety check must be conducted by the employee. They will be provided with a workplace health and safety checklist which must be completed, signed and returned to the employer prior to commencing work from home.

## **11. Frequency of Occupational Health and Safety Inspections**

As set out above, a workplace health and safety inspection or check must be conducted before an employee commences working from home. They will be provided with reasonable notice of the initial inspection.

Subsequent inspections or checks may be required from time to time. The frequency of inspections will depend upon how often an employee works from home and their particular working from home arrangement. This may include random audits. Random audits will only be conducted during working hours.

## **12. Adjustments Required to Make a Home Office Safe**

Where the safety inspection or check reveals that adjustments are required to an employee's home for safety reasons, they must cooperate with ASC in making the adjustments. If adjustments are required, an employee will not be permitted to work from home, until the required adjustments have been made.

An employee will be responsible for making all adjustments to their Home Office and related areas. ASC will not finance any adjustments or structural changes to an employee's home.

## **13. Accident or Injury While Working from Home**

If there is an accident or an employee is injured while working from home, the accident or injury must be immediately reported to management. ASC may investigate the accident or injury. The employee must allow a person, appointed by ASC, access to their home for the purpose of conducting such investigation.

Injuries that occur at home outside working hours are not covered by this or any other ASC Policy or workers' compensation legislation.

#### **14. Equipment Provided by ASC**

ASC may provide some necessary equipment to allow the employee to perform work from home. The equipment required will depend on the particular needs of the employee, the equipment they currently have and their particular working from home arrangement.

Any equipment provided by ASC remains the property of ASC at all times. The employee must use the equipment for legitimate work purposes only. They must not use ASC property for private use and must not misuse or damage ASC property.

In relation to any laptop, mobile phone or other portable property provided by ASC, the employee must comply with any applicable ASC policies or procedures relating to internet, email and computer usage. They must also comply with the terms of any licence or software as well as computer virus and protection requirements. Where an applicant declares they will be unavailable for contact then all equipment must be returned to a Director prior to departing on leave.

ASC is not responsible for any damage caused to the employee's personal or real property during the course of performing work at home.

#### **15. Cost of Utilities**

Employees are required to pay their own home utilities such as electricity, water, gas, heating, air-conditioning, home maintenance and insurance.

#### **16. Insurance of Work Property at Home**

Employees must take out and maintain in force at all times, the following insurance policies:

- a) Occupier's liability insurance, to a minimum amount of \$10 million if the employee is not renting an ASC house; and
- b) Home contents insurance, to a minimum amount of market value if the employee is not renting an ASC house, which effectively covers ASC property.

The employee must produce to ASC, whenever requested to do so, evidence of an acceptable occupier's liability insurance policy and home contents insurance policy which includes cover for loss, theft or damage of ASC property.

#### **17. Terms and Conditions of Engagement when Working from Home**

An employee's terms and conditions of engagement remain the same when working from home. This includes hours of work, remuneration and, in the case of an employee, leave entitlements/accruals. An employee is required to perform their work duties effectively and efficiently, as if they were working in the office. Contracting out or delegating work duties to others without the express written permission of the relevant manager is strictly prohibited.

#### **18. Children or Other Family Members at Home**

If an employee has children at home or other family members who require care or support while the employee works from home, appropriate care for them must be arranged during working hours. Working from home is not a replacement for childcare or other care. If a family member requires an employee's care or support

due to their illness or injury, then an appropriate form of leave, for example carers' leave should be taken, rather than working from home.

In some circumstances it may be acceptable to work from home while a family member or a household member is present. For example, if a child is old enough to require minimal supervision. In these circumstances, an employee must obtain prior written approval from the relevant manager.

## **19. Reporting to Manager**

Reporting is a critical part of any working from home arrangement. The relevant manager will, as far as possible, provide advice concerning the required reporting arrangements prior to commencement of the working from home arrangement. An employee must report to the relevant manager what work has been completed while working from home and comply with any reporting requirements, for example providing written reports, compiling work sheets etc. If an employee does not comply with reporting requirements, the working from home arrangement may be terminated.

## **20. Communication with Staff**

Employees must inform other team members and manager of the hours/days the working from home arrangement applies and appropriate contact details. If an employee is working from home regularly, they must maintain regular communication with their manager and work team while working from home. It is an employee's responsibility to ensure their work team can effectively communicate with them while working from home and that the employee is available to discuss work matters if required.

## **21. Requirement to Attend the Office on Days you Work from Home**

All employees working from home may be required to attend work from time to time. Even when an employee regularly works from home on designated days, they may be required to attend work on those days. In particular, employees may be required to attend staff meetings, announcements, client functions, employee training, in case of emergencies or where other work commitments arise.

## **22. When Working from Home Arrangement is Terminated or Ends**

If an employee is not happy with the working from home arrangement for whatever reason, management should be informed as soon as possible.

The arrangement may be reviewed to address concerns or terminated where appropriate.

Working from home arrangements will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they operate effectively, meet the requirements of the organisation and do not adversely affect other employees.

If ASC does not want to continue the working from home arrangement for whatever reason, it may review or terminate the arrangement at any time. ASC does not require an employee's agreement to terminate a working from home arrangement. If ASC terminates a working from home arrangement, the employee will be given at least 24 hours' notice.

If an employee's working from home arrangement is terminated or ends for any reason (including at the end of a trial period), they must return all ASC equipment within 14 days. Further, the employee must do all things necessary to immediately cancel the separate telephone line where applicable.

## **23. Security of Information and Property**

As a remote user, an employee will be provided with access to and use of ASC property, equipment and information, including the ASC network. By accepting and using remote access privileges, an employee has a shared responsibility with ASC to protect ASC property, equipment and information against theft, unauthorised access and destruction.

Employees must take all reasonable precautions to secure ASC property, equipment and information (both paper and electronic) within their home. This includes employees taking all reasonable precautions to prevent unauthorised access and use of such property, equipment and information.

An employee's obligation to maintain confidentiality in relation to ASC information continues while working from home, and is the same as if working in the office. However, given the potential security issues, an employee must take extra care to ensure confidential information is properly protected.

## **24. Steps to Secure ASC Property, Equipment and Information**

Firstly, employee must ensure they properly secure their home. Depending on the amount and nature of ASC information, equipment and property stored in their home, it may be necessary to install a security system in the home. Accordingly, if requested by ASC, an employee must allow a person, appointed by ASC, to access their home and conduct a security assessment. If possible, the Home Office should also be lockable. For example, an employee may be required to install a separate lock on the Home Office door.

Secondly, an employee must secure all ASC documents and portable equipment in a lockable filing cabinet and secure the key. An employee must not provide the key to unauthorised persons, including family or household members.

Finally, an employee must ensure appropriate security systems are in place on their PC (such as passwords) in accordance with ASC's requirements. Employees must not disclose their password to any person, including family or household members.

## **25. Breach of Working from Home Policy**

When working from home, an employee must comply with the terms and conditions contained in this Policy. Employees will be required to enter into a formal working from home agreement with ASC, recording the specifics of the working from home arrangement.

In the case of employees of ASC who are found to have breached this Policy, they may be subjected to disciplinary action in accordance with relevant ASC policies. The type and severity of the disciplinary action will depend upon the circumstances of the case and the seriousness of the breach. In serious cases, this may include termination of employment.

Contractors or agents of ASC who are found to have breached this Policy may have their contracts with ASC terminated or not renewed.

## **26. Associated Documents**

*Workplace Health and Safety*