COVID-19 Pandemic Policy

Introduction:

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated there is a high risk of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreading to other countries around the world. Then in March 2020 WHO declared the COVID-19 a pandemic.

From time to time infectious diseases develop into epidemics or pandemics, and create increased risks for the community. These occasions require specific policies targeted at the particular disease in question and general efforts at preparedness.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the strategies and actions that the Organisation intends to take to prevent the transmission of the infectious disease pandemic known as COVID-19, and control the transmission of COVID-19 when a case/s is suspected and/or identified.

For the purpose of this policy, infectious diseases mean diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another.

The Organisation will be guided by the information and directions provided by State and Federal Health Departments and the World Health Organisation, and its work health and safety obligations under the relevant Federal and State WHS and OHS Acts.

- The Organisation wishes as far as possible to protect their clients, employees, volunteers and stakeholders from infection or contagion by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Organisation will facilitate, through its policies and procedures, strategies designed to reduce risks to clients, employees, volunteers and stakeholders.

- The Organisation will comply with all directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities in relation to the epidemic or pandemic.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

Employees	Directors	Contractors/ Consultants (including their employees)	Volunteers	Suppliers (when on site)
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Policy:

1.1 The Organisation will as far as possible plan, and make advance preparations, for the possibility that its operations will be affected by an epidemic or pandemic

1.2 As at 12 March 2020, COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic, the Organisation will, as far as possible:

1.2.1 Assist its clients, employees, volunteers and others, as relevant, to minimise their exposure to the illness concerned.

1.2.2 Encourage and assist those who have reason to believe that they are at risk of contracting the epidemic or pandemic to obtain a diagnosis.

1.2.3 Support employees, volunteers, contractors and clients to take reasonable precautions to prevent infection or contagion.

1.2.4 Provide standard precautions such hand wash and hand sanitiser or equivalent.

1.2.5 Maintain, as best as is reasonably practicable, the continuation of services and operations throughout the period of concern.

1.3 As at 12 March 2020, COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic, the Organisation requires people covered by this Policy to take the following precautions:

1.3.1 Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water or clean them with an alcohol-based hand rub.

1.3.2 Wherever possible, maintain at least 1.5 metres (5 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing ("Social Distancing limits").

1.3.3 Restrict all non-essential meetings (especially external) until further notice.

1.3.4 Limit face-to-face meetings and wherever possible utilise electronic communications, such as phone, email or videoconferencing as much as possible.

1.3.5 Keep contacts to small groups as much as possible, in order to limit any potential for cross-contamination of employees and? clients.

1.3.6 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, or shaking hands with others.

1.3.7 Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) should be wiped with disinfectant before use.

1.3.8 Make sure you follow good hygiene, and encourage others to do the same. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, and disposing of used tissues immediately.

1.3.9 If you are feeling unwell, or experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19 infection (refer to attached *self-assessment for risk of coronavirus* for information), notify your manager through a phone call. It is recommended that you seek medical advice promptly, and follow the directions of your medical practitioner. You are required to provide a medical clearance before you will be allowed to return to work.

1.3.10 As duty of care the employer will advise employees of any employees' health concerns in relation to COVID-19. In carrying out such notifications, employers should make reasonable efforts not to disclose information that might (alone or together with publicly available information) identify the individual without permission.

1.3.11 If your role permits and you feel well enough to work and your medical practitioner supports this, ask your Manager whether you can temporarily work from home.

1.3.12 Be vigilant in regard to the external environment that is changing regularly (e.g. travel).

2. Leave and Flexibility

2.1 The Organisation recognises that full-time and part-time employees may request, or require, paid and unpaid leave when they are unwell, at risk of, or vulnerable to, infection, and at risk of infecting others.

2.2 Employees may make use of leave consistent with the organisation's leave policy, relevant award and the National Employment Standards (including access to unpaid leave).

2.3 The Organisation may, at its discretion, direct those affected, or reasonably at risk of being affected, by the pandemic or epidemic, to remain away from the workplace or work remotely.

2.4 The Organisation takes its duty of care to ensure the safety of its employees and clients seriously. If an employee is exhibiting signs of COVID-19 then the Organisation reserves its right to request an employee provide a medical certificate stating fitness for duty to the Organisation before returning to work. In the event that an employee elects not to seek medical attention, the Organisation will require a self-isolation period of 14 days as recommended, before the employee returns to work; this self-isolation period will either utilise personal leave or unpaid leave of the employee.

3   Related Documents

3.1 Australian Government Department of Health
https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-healthalert;
https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid

3.2 Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services – information on COVID-19
https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

3.3 NSW Government Department of Health – information on COVID-19
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx

Referenced Documents

- Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Fair Work Regulations 2009 (Cth)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC)

Version History

Version Number	Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	13 Mar 2020	New Policy
1.1	19 Mar 2020	Update for social distancing, limitations on the size of meetings, inclusion of checklist for "*self-assessment for risk of coronavirus*"

Authorisation

Authorisation	Date	Next Review Date
Authorised by: Interim CEO	19 Mar 2020	As required or no later than 1 year

Self-assessment for risk of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Have you been in, or transited through, mainland China or Iran in the past 14 days, returned from South Korea on/after 5 March, or returned from Italy on/after 11 March?

YES → Do not attend work and self-quarantine for 14 days after leaving that country

NO

Have you been in CLOSE contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
CLOSE contact is defined as:
– spending more than 15 minutes face-to-face with a person who is a confirmed case, in the 24 hours before they showed symptoms or once they showed symptoms
– sharing a closed space for more than two hours with a person who is a confirmed case, in the 24 hours before they showed symptoms or once they showed symptoms.

YES → Self-quarantine for 14 days from the last day of contact with the confirmed case

NO

Have you been in CASUAL contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
CASUAL contact is defined as:
– spending less than 15 minutes face-to-face in any setting with a person who is a confirmed case AND they had symptoms at the time
– sharing a closed space for less than two hours with a person who is a confirmed case AND they had symptoms at the time.

YES → Go about your normal business, but monitor yourself for 14 days for the most common symptoms of COVID-19*

NO

Are you ill in hospital with pneumonia?

YES → The hospital will arrange testing and appropriate care

NO

Are you experiencing fever or respiratory symptoms?

YES → Testing is not recommended for you at the current time unless you have returned from overseas in the past 14 days

NO

You do not need to self-quarantine or be tested for COVID-19
If you are unwell with any other illness your doctor will assess and manage you in the normal way.

If you have a fever or respiratory symptoms*:
Ring the COVID-19 24-hour hotline 1800 675 398, or a GP or emergency department, to arrange for testing and appropriate care

If you test positive
You will receive care at home or in hospital depending on the severity of your illness

If you test negative
If you were in self-quarantine continue to self-quarantine for the remainder of the 14 days

If you are a casual contact, continue to monitor yourself for the remainder of the 14 days

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Additional information for healthcare workers and residential care workers

In addition to the above steps, the following information applies to healthcare workers and residential care workers who have direct contact with patients or residents.

If you have an influenza-like illness, which is a fever above 37.5 and symptoms of an acute respiratory infection (shortness of breath, cough, coryza and/or sore throat):
– **do not go to work**
– **ring the COVID-19**, **24-hour hotline 1800 675 398**, or a GP or emergency department, to arrange for testing and appropriate care.

If you test negative you can return to work when well, at the direction of your treating doctor.

A healthcare worker who has worn appropriate personal protective equipment while treating a patient does not become a close contact as a result of that care.
They may be a casual contact as a result of that care so should monitor themself for 14 days.

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*The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle pain and fatigue.

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