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TELEWORKING IN THE ABS

The authority for teleworking arrangements (including working from home) comes from the *ABS Enterprise Agreement 2024 -2027* [Notes Link](#)

Scope

1. This guideline applies to all ABS office-based employees.
2. This guideline is not applicable to ABS Interviewers and Census field staff employed under the Census Determination.
3. This guideline must be read in conjunction with the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy [[Notes Link](#)].

Definitions

4. Telework describes an arrangement where an ABS office-based employee has an agreement to work in a location other than an ABS office, usually a home office. A request to undertake telework may form part of a Flexible Working Arrangement [[Notes Link](#)].
5. Requests to undertake Telework will be considered by the appropriate Delegate. In these guidelines, the Delegate means an ABS employee who holds the authority to consider and approve or reject requests for Flexible Working Arrangements. The Delegate may vary dependent on the nature of the flexible working arrangement, including whether the employee has access to ABS Sensitive Information.

Principles

6. ABS expects its employees to be aware of, and adhere to the APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct, and act with integrity and professionalism at all times, including while Teleworking.
7. All ABS policies and guidelines apply to teleworkers (formal and informal) and their line managers.
8. An employee teleworking is covered by the same employment conditions as an employee working at an office site under this agreement.
9. The ABS will not impose caps on groups of employees on the time that may be approved to work from home or remotely, with each request to be considered on its merits.
10. The ABS may provide equipment necessary for, or reimbursement, for all or part of the costs associated with establishing a teleworking arrangement.
11. The ABS will provide employees with guidance on working from home safely.

12. The ABS will not require employees to work from home unless it is lawful and reasonable to do so. This may include where circumstances prevent attendance at an office during a pandemic or natural disaster. In these situations, the ABS will consider the circumstances of the employees and options to achieve work outcomes safely.
13. All employees are expected to maintain an active connection to the work area and office, and to contribute to a supportive workplace culture.
14. Employees with management responsibilities are expected to continue to contribute to staff development while Teleworking.
15. All employees are expected to manage their telework/office attendance patterns in line with their approved agreements.
16. Employees should not undertake telework (paid or unpaid) while on any approved or unplanned leave, for example during periods of Annual or Personal Leave.

Teleworking Agreements

17. Depending on the circumstances, telework arrangements may be formal or informal arrangements.

Informal teleworking arrangements

18. Informal teleworking arrangements include short-term or ad hoc arrangements of less than 10 working days over a 12-month period. Informal arrangements may include:
 - a. Short-term or ad hoc arrangements - employees who Telework in response to a specific set of circumstances, such as an emergency situation (when it is safe and reasonable to do so).
 - b. day extenders - employees who take work away from the office, on evenings or weekends (e.g. taking work home to write reports or check emails).
19. Informal teleworking arrangements are not subject to the same requirements as formal teleworking arrangements. Informal teleworking arrangements may be approved by the line manager via email if they are satisfied that:
 - a. there is suitable work to be undertaken from the telework site and it is of a non-sensitive nature, (Note. you may not work on Market Sensitive Information (MSI) without a formal telework approval);

b. such arrangements are consistent with health and safety requirements (refer to the Work Health and Safety Manual found in the ABS Corporate Manuals [Notes Link](#)); and

c. confidentiality and security requirements are maintained.

20. Employees who have been approved to undertake informal teleworking are responsible for providing, maintaining, and supporting the reasonable requirement of equipment to mitigate health and safety risks, to enable them to perform their duties effectively, securely, and safely from the teleworking site.

21. Employees who telework on a regular basis, not as described above, will require approval of a formal Telework Agreement as part of a formal Flexible Working Arrangement.

Formal Telework Arrangements

22. Formal telework arrangements accommodate employees who are seeking to regularly undertake a proportion of their work at a site or sites other than their nominal ABS office.

23. Employees who undertake telework for 10 or more days over a 12-month period, must have a current, complete, and approved Telework Agreement in place before the arrangements commence.

24. Generally, employees are expected to spend 40% of their workdays each fortnight working from an ABS office.

25. All requests for Telework, as part of a Flexible Working Arrangement, must be considered on their merits, on a case-by-case basis, with a bias towards approving requests.

Requesting a Formal Telework Agreement

26. To initiate a formal teleworking arrangement, employees must:

a. read the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy [\[Notes Link\]](#) and Teleworking in the ABS guideline (this guideline);

b. undertake the compulsory Telework training, or have completed it within the previous 2-years;

c. discuss their proposal with their line manager

- d. complete a self-assessment of their teleworking site/s to ensure suitability; and
- e. submit a request for a Flexible Working Arrangement (Telework Agreement).

Responding to a request for a Formal Telework Agreement

27. The Australian Statistician or their delegate (Delegate) must provide a written response to a request within 21 days of receiving the request advising if the request is approved or refused.

28. Responses to requests for Formal Telework Agreements must be managed in accordance with paragraphs 11 to 17 of the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.

Varying, Pausing or Terminating a Formal Telework Agreement

29. An employee may request to make an ongoing variation to an approved Telework Agreement. The variation of an approved Telework Agreement constitutes a new Telework request and is therefore subject to the formal request and response process. An employee may also request to pause or terminate an approved Telework Agreement.

30. Situations that may lead an employee to seek to vary, pause or terminate their Telework Agreement include, but are not limited to:

- a. moving to a new role;
- b. moving to a new telework space or site; or
- c. changes in other personal circumstances.

31. A manager or Delegate may seek to vary, pause, or terminate a Formal Telework Agreement.

32. Situations that may lead a manager or Delegate to seek to vary, pause or terminate a formal Telework Agreement include, but are not limited to:

- a. where a review of a Telework Agreement identifies it no longer supports the business requirements of the ABS;
- b. where there is demonstrated and repeated failure to comply with the agreed telework arrangements;
- c. where significant security or work health and safety risks are identified that cannot be resolved;

- d. where performance concerns are not able to be resolved while teleworking;
 - e. where a staff member has a medical condition, or where there is an active workers compensation case with rehabilitation support under the Fitness for Duty guidelines ([Notes Link](#)), and medical advice recommends an alteration to office attendance patterns.
33. Where a manager or Delegate seeks to vary, pause or terminate a formal Telework Agreement it must be managed in accordance with paragraphs 22 to 27 of the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.

Ad-hoc changes to formal Teleworking Agreements

34. Teleworkers may occasionally be required to attend their nominal ABS office site, on a day where they would usually Telework, to deal with urgent and other essential matters that will significantly impact business requirements or operations. This may result in additional days in an office, depending on the employee and reason for change. In these circumstances this must be discussed with the employee with an intention of genuinely trying to reach agreement to accommodate the employee's circumstances subject to any reasonable business grounds. As much notice as possible should be given.
35. Where an employee has attended an ABS office on a day that they would usually have been teleworking, per their usual pattern of attendance, the employee may discuss with their line manager about teleworking on an alternate day, where possible.
36. Where an employee intends to Telework on a day that they would usually attend an ABS office, per their usual pattern of attendance, the employee should discuss this with their line manager.
37. Where an employee holds a role or additional workplace responsibility (such as First Aid Officer) where usual patterns of office attendance are coordinated with other employees to ensure coverage, and they wish to alter their usual pattern of attendance, employees should discuss with their manager and advise the role coordinator (such as First Aid Coordinator).
38. In the situation where there is an unplanned disruption, the following steps need to be taken:
- a. for an ABS outage that impacts on systems access, the line manager will contact the teleworker to discuss alternate work arrangements. The teleworker may be given direction on alternate offline work and will be considered on duty for the duration of the outage, consistent with their existing (e.g. part time) work arrangements.

b. for a power or telecommunication outage at the telework site, the teleworker must notify their line manager as soon as they are able to do so. The teleworker may be required to attend the ABS office or go to an alternate work site (e.g. work hub). If this is not practical the teleworker may be required to take leave for the duration of the outage, depending on the expected duration of the outage.

Other Requirements

Work Health and Safety (WHS)

39. A telework work site is considered an ABS workplace, during the time-period ABS work is being undertaken at that site, for the purposes of the WHS Act, 2011.

40. For all formal and informal teleworking arrangements, an employee's line manager is responsible for ensuring a health and safety assessment of the teleworking site is completed and that appropriate risk controls are in place. Information on how to undertake the assessment is included in the mandatory online training and supporting WHS knowledge documents.

41. For formal Teleworking Agreements, the results of the employee's self-assessment are reviewed during the approval process by the employee's line manager and Delegate. If it is not feasible to make the designated site suitable to undertake telework, the Delegate may determine the site unsuitable for teleworking purposes.

42. The assessment may also be made available to other appropriate people, such as People Management and Wellbeing section, a rehabilitation provider, or Comcare in the event of a Worker's Compensation Claim or WHS compliance inspection.

43. If an employee has a case managed medical condition or is being managed under the Fitness for Duty guidelines, they will be eligible for telework unless a medical practitioner does not recommend it. A graduated return to work may occur under a teleworking arrangement.

44. In the event of an emerging emergency situation at or near a teleworking site (e.g. local flooding, nearby bushfire, house plumbing, etc), the teleworker must ensure their safety is not compromised before notifying their line manager of the situation as soon as they are reasonably able to do so. To ensure both parties are kept aware of changes to the situation the teleworker and line manager will, where possible, keep in regular contact.

45. Teleworkers are expected to:

- a. familiarise themselves with their local emergency warning websites and monitor information on ABS 1800 159 357 to monitor emergency situations;
- b. identify their route(s) of exit from the telework site;
- c. have smoke detectors installed at the telework site compliant with state laws and understand the requirement to test them;
- d. have first aid supplies available at the telework site and familiarise themselves with the contact details of their closest medical service;
- e. if an emergency is declared, follow directions from their local state emergency services; and
- f. complete an Incident Reporting & Early Intervention System (IREIS) report as soon as practical after the event.

46. If a manager becomes aware a teleworker is responding to an emergency situation that might impact a broader group of ABS employees, they are to contact National Property and Office Services so that the 1800X emergency channels can be updated. Any variations to this approach will be detailed in emergency management procedures.

47. Work Health and Safety Administrators are available to offer basic advice about home-based work environments.

48. Further information on health and safety at work can be found in the [Health and Safety Assistant](#).

Security, Facilities, and Insurances

49. To be approved to undertake Telework, employees must have:

- a. a private work area away from others in the dwelling; and
- b. lockable storage where required.

50. Further information on security requirements in relation to telework can be found in the ABS Protective Security Framework 2022-

[25notes:///CA25844D0005763D//0257FE23614B70F3CA2586050076928E](#) ([Notes Link](#) Subject: ABS Protective Security Framework 2020-22).

51. The ABS will provide and maintain equipment and supplies reasonably required for the employee to telework. Equipment and supplies mean an ABS laptop and headset. Portable small scale ergonomic equipment issued to an employee and used in the office

(e.g. non-standard mouse/keyboard) can be transported between the office and the telework site by the employee. Where an employee is eligible for Reasonable Workplace Adjustment (RWA), ([Notes Link](#) Workplace Diversity, Reasonable Workplace Adjustment) and is teleworking or is participating in home based work as part of a medically recommended return to work plan (RTWP), equipment and supplies are those which satisfy the requirements of the RWA or RTWP.

52. It is the employee's responsibility to assess the personal implications of teleworking with respect to taxation, building and household contents insurance, including third party liability insurance and leasing or mortgage arrangements.

53. Home insurance policies may not cover business activities, or may have clauses excluding cover for such activities, and employees are responsible for meeting any requirements of their home and contents insurer.

54. ABS supplied equipment will generally be covered for insurance purposes as specified in the ABS Comcover policy.

55. The ABS expects staff to take all reasonable care to ensure their acts or omissions do not negatively impact the health and safety of any other persons who might enter the teleworking site. In most circumstances, employees are responsible for the safety of visitors to their homes and may therefore choose to take out public liability insurance for this reason.

56. Employees must not undertake in-person external engagement in connection with their work duties at their telework site. All in-person meetings with external parties must occur at an ABS managed or third-party facility.

57. Utility expenses (e.g. gas, electricity, internet, phone) will not be reimbursed by the ABS. ABS employees may wish to visit the Australian Taxation Office website and make their own enquiries about the appropriate proportion of these types of expenses that may be claimed as a tax deduction. Taxation issues are solely a matter for the employee.

Access

58. The ABS may from time to time carry out authorised activities, such as security inspections, work health and safety (WHS) assessments/inspections and ABS Incident Investigations. Home based teleworking employees must allow appropriate ABS employees and ABS nominated agents access to their telework site at reasonable times for such authorised activities to be carried out. Subject to circumstances reasonably requiring a shorter period of notice, an employee will be given at least 48 hours' notice of such visits

and is entitled to be present. The authorised activities will be conducted with appropriate sensitivity to the employee and other residents of the home.

Staff with access to sensitive ABS information

59. Staff with access to sensitive ABS information, including Market Sensitive Information (MSI) have additional obligations when Teleworking.

60. Remote access to sensitive ABS information may only occur where staff have been authorised via the 'access to MSI process' and must only occur at the home location approved within the Telework Agreement. Access must not be undertaken in public places such as airports, cafes etc.

61. Staff accessing MSI must obtain a Baseline security clearance or above, prior to commencing telework.

62. Only ABS supplied devices and the NGD environment may be used to access MSI. These devices provide more secure environments and reduce potential IT risks.

63. No paper printouts of sensitive ABS information, including MSI, are to be taken out of the office.

64. Ensure you are attending clearance meetings from a private part of the house where other people and devices (e.g. google home) can't hear discussions.

65. Where an employee whose duties involve working with MSI wishes to enter into a telework arrangement, they must not WFH on MSI until they have completed the Access to MSI process and been given authorisation to access MSI and WFH on MSI, prior to the Telework Agreement being finalised.

66. Staff working on MSI will have their teleworking arrangements reviewed periodically (i.e. biannually during Development & Performance Agreement (DPA) reviews, or more frequently if staff or team circumstances change). All access to MSI is reviewed quarterly by the General Manager of the Economy and Environment Division (TEED).

67. Changes to an employee's authorisation to access sensitive information, including MSI, may result in a review of their telework agreement.

68. Further information about MSI, including a list of publications containing MSI is contained in the ABS Trading Restrictions Policy

[[notes:///CA255E8A0003F1E8/D0FCD1F53943D2BECA2570650016FE52/A3F7EF3AB7F134A7CA2585730022CF73](https://www.abs.gov.au/notes/CA255E8A0003F1E8/D0FCD1F53943D2BECA2570650016FE52/A3F7EF3AB7F134A7CA2585730022CF73)Notes Link]. Information about how to gain authorisation to

access MSI is contained in the “Requesting access to market sensitive information” on Services@ABS.

Staff in receipt of workplace responsibilities allowances

69. Some official workplace responsibilities require physical attendance in the workplace to perform the duty, for example Fire Wardens. Staff who occupy these roles must ensure that their proposed Telework Agreement allows them to attend the workplace in accordance with the requirements of the workplace responsibility as set out in the relevant guideline.

Staff with caring responsibilities

70. For the purposes of this guideline, employees with caring responsibilities includes carers as defined by the Carer Recognition Act 2010*, and employees with caring responsibilities for children.

71. Teleworking arrangements may not be effective if an employee is undertaking caring responsibilities at the same time as undertaking their work, but this will depend on the nature of the caring responsibilities. The Delegate must be satisfied that the employee is able to deliver their work program under the agreed arrangements, also ensuring that balancing work and caring responsibilities does not adversely impact on the health and well-being of the employee or any other person.

* The [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#) defines people with caring responsibilities as those who provide care, personal support and assistance to another individual in need of support due to disability, a medical condition (including terminal or chronic illness), mental illness, or who is frail and/or aged.

Responsibilities

All Employees

72. All employees who telework, or who manage employees who telework, must read, and understand the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy [[Notes Link](#)] and Teleworking in the ABS guideline (this guideline).

73. Teleworkers must:

- a. adhere to their agreed number of days of attendance in an ABS office unless an ad-hoc arrangement or short-term variation is approved.
- b. actively manage and take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others at the teleworking site;
- c. take all reasonable precautions to protect and secure ABS property and information;
- d. notify their line manager by email of any changes in home circumstances that may impact the security of the telework site or affect the teleworker's capacity to work safely at the telework site;
- e. maintain regular communication channels for voice, video, and email contact with managers, other employees, and stakeholders of their work area.
- f. Make their own enquiries about the appropriate proportion of telework expenses that may be claimed as a tax deduction through the ATO.

74. It is essential that ongoing and regular communication is maintained between employees, team, and management to avoid / overcome issues of isolation and ensure teleworkers remain connected and active in being an integral part of their work group. A communication plan should be agreed between managers and employees prior to the commencement of a formal teleworking arrangement. At a minimum, a communication plan should include clear expectations between the line manager and employee about the following:

- a. ongoing and regular contact between the line manager and the teleworker;
- b. participation by the teleworker in team meetings as appropriate;
- c. inclusion of the teleworker in training and development opportunities; and
- d. communication/engagement between team members, other business contacts and the teleworking employee.
- e. engagement with their local office
- f. if the telework agreement includes in-office attendance of less than 40% per fortnight, the communication plan should outline what a reasonably practical cadence is, or what type of events would benefit employees and the business area for in office attendance. This cadence / events should consider the personal circumstances and impact to the employee alongside reasonable business grounds.

Managers

75. Managers should consider staff well-being, team dynamics and productivity, and ensure there are processes in place to support these.
76. While teleworking, Managers must continue to contribute to staff development and building a supportive workplace culture. These commitments should also form an active part of regular DPA discussions.
77. Line managers should, to the extent that it is reasonable, provide teleworkers with a wide variety of work to ensure that their knowledge and skills are maintained and extended, while keeping in mind logistical and security requirements that may restrict certain types of work under teleworking arrangements.
78. Sight photographs of sufficient detail to assess suitability of the proposed work area.
79. Ensure that employees have an active / approved telework agreement in place.

Delegates

80. In considering requests for formal Teleworking Agreements, the Delegate must follow the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy which sets out the required considerations, timeframes, and response process.
81. The Delegate must be satisfied that a telework arrangement will not compromise the security of ABS information and meets the requirement of the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF) for protecting ABS' physical and information assets.
82. Delegates must also consider if any additional requirements, described in paragraphs 40 to 71, are applicable and if they have been met.

Privacy

83. The ABS will retain an electronic copy of approved Teleworking Agreements
84. Personal information is collected by the ABS, in the ABS Telework Agreement, for the purposes of facilitating appropriate telework arrangements.
85. Failure to provide relevant personal information to the ABS in relation to a Teleworking Agreement may negatively impact on the ability of the ABS to assess and approve a teleworking arrangement.

86. Personal information contained in a Teleworking Agreement will be shared with the employee's line manager and the Delegate responsible for approving the Telework Agreement.

87. The Telework Agreement may be accessed by People Management & Wellbeing, ABS Security and/or the Office Security Director, Pays and Entitlements Section and other appropriate parties such as a rehabilitation provider.

88. The ABS may be required to disclose any personal information contained in the Teleworking Agreement to Comcare and any other entity required by law, in order to meet its obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act (Cth) 2011 and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988.

89. The ABS privacy policy (www.abs.gov.au/privacy) explains how you can make a privacy related enquiry or lodge a privacy complaint.

Further information

90. People Management and Wellbeing, Protective Security, National Property & Office Services and End User Computing will provide advice on relevant issues in relation to Flexible Working Arrangements, as well as developing and maintaining supporting knowledge documents in Services@ABS.

The ABS supports flexible working arrangements to enable you to balance your working and personal life. To enable us to continue informing Australia's important decisions, we need to ensure that this flexibility is balanced with operational requirements.

This module will touch on flexible working, and primarily focus on Teleworking; including your responsibilities and obligations as an employee of the ABS. By the end of this module you will be able to:

- **articulate** the differences between formal and informal flexible working in the ABS
- **apply** for a flexible working arrangement, including teleworking
- **set up** your workstation so that your work is secure and you remain safe, healthy and well
- **identify** practical ways you can support yourself and your teams to work safely and productively.

What are flexible working arrangements?

A Flexible Working Arrangement (or FWA) is a formal agreement between the ABS and an employee around how they wish to work.

Flexibility applies to all roles in the ABS. This flexibility may look different for each individual employee depending on the role or circumstance. The list below provides some examples.

Location of work

Examples of changes to location of work include:

- Teleworking working from home for part of your work pattern (this will be explored later in the module).
- Working between two or more offices on a regular basis.

Changes to hours of work

Examples of changes to hours of work include:

- Changes to start and finish times: Where you work your required hours but have different start and/or finish times. For example, starting each day at 7am and finishing at 3:30pm.
- Compressed hours: Where you maintain your required hours working more hours everyday with the equivalent time accrued as a non-work day.
- Part-time working arrangements: Where you reduce your regular pattern of work to less than 37.5 hours per week.

Patterns of work

Examples of alternative patterns of work include:

- Split Shifts: Where a work day is split into two or more parts. For example, a person may work from 07:00 to 10:00. They sign off from 10:00 until 13:00 and then return to work until 18:00. A regular break for rest or to eat meals does not count as a "split".
- Job Sharing: Where two, or sometimes more, people are retained on a part-time or reduced-time basis to perform a job normally fulfilled by one person working full-time. For example, Sarah and Arilla share the same role. Sarah works at a 0.6 FTE (3 days a week) and Arilla at a 0.4 FTE (2 days a week).

All employees are entitled to make a request for an FWA. Teleworking can form part, or all, of an FWA.

Each request will be considered on a case by case basis with a bias towards approving requests, subject to operational requirements and appropriate controls. *Bias towards approving* requests means that the ABS will approve FWA requests unless there are reasonable business grounds to not approve. This will be explored in more detail throughout the module.

- For several years, the ABS has maintained that a teleworking arrangement discussion starts at 40% office attendance. Operational needs and personal circumstances are then taken into consideration leading up to an agreed ratio.

- It is broadly recognised that a balance of in-person connection and cross-team interactions offer significant benefits to both the employee and the organisation. These connections, within and outside your immediate team, help build and sustain our strong organisational culture.

Released under FOI Act

What is Teleworking?

Teleworking is where an ABS office-based employee has an agreement to work in a location other than an ABS office, usually a home office. A request to undertake telework will form part of a Flexible Working Arrangement.

In the ABS, we have formal and informal telework arrangements.

Formal Telework Arrangements

Telework, as part of a formal Flexible Working Arrangement, can accommodate employees who expect to regularly complete their work at a site, or sites, other than the ABS office.

Formal teleworking arrangements apply to employees who undertake telework for 10 or more working days over a 12-month period.

A formal Flexible Working Arrangement approved by the appropriate Delegate is required before teleworking can start. In most circumstances, this will be your EL2. However, depending on the number of days you are seeking to telework and/or if you work on Market Sensitive Information, your delegate will be a Program Manager or above.

- [See the Delegations for Flexible Working.](#)

Informal Teleworking Arrangements

Informal teleworking arrangements include short-term or ad-hoc arrangements of less than 10 days over a 12-month period.

A Flexible Working Arrangement is not required, but an email documenting the arrangement would be appropriate.

Informal telework arrangements can be approved by a Delegate as long as:

- there is suitable work;
- such arrangements are consistent with [health and safety requirements\(opens in a new tab\)](#); and
- confidentiality and security requirements are maintained.

What is expected of me as a teleworker?

1. Work in a separate work area, away from family areas, to perform your duties safely and productively.
2. Read and understand your responsibilities and obligations under the Flexible Working Arrangements and Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines, including complying with all health & safety and security requirements.
3. Work the required number of hours on telework days and deliver work program outputs as agreed with your line manager.
4. Maintain appropriate contact with your line manager, team members and other business contacts.

5. Ensure that you are as readily contactable as when you are working in the office.
6. Inform your line manager in a timely manner if there is a disruption at your telework site, which impacts on your ability to work.

Maintaining teleworking arrangements

There may be times when a Telework arrangement needs to pause, change or cease; for example, where the arrangement no longer suits your circumstances.

An employee may request to make an ongoing variation to an approved Telework Agreement. The variation of an approved Telework Agreement constitutes a new Telework request and is therefore subject to the formal request and response process.

Situations that may lead an employee to seek to vary, pause or terminate their Telework Agreement include, but are not limited to:

- moving to a new role
- moving to a new telework space or site or
- changes in other personal circumstances.

A manager or Delegate may seek to vary, pause, or terminate a Formal Telework Agreement. More information will be found later in this module.

Where a manager or Delegate seeks to vary, pause or terminate a formal Telework Agreement it must be managed in accordance with paragraphs 22 to 27 of the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.

Disputes related to Teleworking will be handled in accordance with the [Resolving Workplace Issues & Dispute Resolution Guidelines](#).

How to apply for teleworking

Follow these four steps to get your teleworking agreement in place.

Step 1

Read relevant documents: Read the Formal Flexible Working Arrangements Policy and Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines.

Links can be found at the end of the module.

Step 2

Discuss: Discuss suitability with your line manager based on the considerations detailed in the guidelines.

Step 3

Get application-ready: Complete this eLearning module and complete the Teleworking checklist.

Links can be found at the end of this module.

Step 4

Apply: Complete the application form and send to your manager to submit your proposed Teleworking arrangement.

My arrangement was approved, now what?

Once it has been signed:

1. Ensure your home address, phone number and hours of work are accurate in Pay & Leave.
2. Send your Teleworking Agreement to the Payroll & Entitlements Section as a formal record.
3. Note this agreement in your Development and Performance Agreement.

Keep it up to date

If your circumstances change for example, you move to a new section, are given access to Market Sensitive Information, move to a new telework location etc, you must update your arrangement with your line manager. Where there are changes, you must follow the above steps.

How do I get the most from my teleworking arrangement?

Flexible working, including Teleworking, provides a range of benefits to both you as an employee of the ABS and to the ABS as an employer. Let's explore how you can get the most from your Teleworking arrangement.

Keys to a successful teleworking arrangement

To have a successful teleworking arrangement, you need to have:

1. A clear understanding of your role and responsibilities
2. Clear work program deliverables
3. Strong communication protocols

4 tips to help you succeed

Working flexibly often means working in dispersed locations. These 4 tips can help you and your peers keep connected and working efficiently.

Tip 1: Embrace technology

Learn how to leverage technologies and platforms such as MS Teams, meeting rooms with dial-in abilities, emails and group messages.

Tip 2: Check in

It is important to stay connected and make sure you are clear around the expectations of your manager.

Have regular catch-ups with your manager, team and colleagues, both informal and formal.

Tip 3: No-one likes cold calls

Communicate just like you would with someone sitting next to you, or even if they are in another office.

If you want to call someone, give them a heads up; message them via MS Teams to check if it is a suitable time.

Tip 4: Sharing is caring

[Use the location feature \(opens in a new tab\)](#) to keep others informed of your work location for that day.

This helps your manager understand if there is relevant information in case of emergency, or if there are events happening at your ABS office such as gatherings or meetings.

What to do in case of...

Troubles with NGD!

It's 8.30am. You have a coffee in one hand and your phone in the other. You are ready to sign into NGD to start your day. But for some reason, your laptop isn't working quite right? Now what?

Never fear! IT-related problems can happen, and here are three steps you can take:

- Contact your line manager; let them know you are having some problems. Be sure you have your manager's / team's phone number.
- If you do not have access to the Services@ABS portal, phone Services@ABS on 1800 060 439 (toll free number) - weekdays 8:30am to 5:00pm (AEST / AEDT time).
- If you have access to the Services@ABS portal start by searching for a knowledge article and, if you need more information, seek assistance by submitting a ticket.

Power outage!

It's 1pm. You have just had lunch and are about to jump into your weekly team meeting. You open your calendar, and the power goes out! Now what?

Things happen. But how do you navigate this from a telework perspective?

1. Contact your line manager; let them know you are having some problems.
2. If possible and practical, attend your nearest ABS Office to continue working.
3. If it is not practical to attend your nearest ABS Office, in some cases you may be required to take leave for the duration of the outage, depending on its expected duration.

Did you know you can join MS Teams meetings by dialling in?

Check in with your line manager to see if they can provide you with the meeting phone number and ID.

Staying healthy and secure when teleworking

When teleworking, maintaining a safe and secure environment is essential. Let's explore ways you can ensure you are working effectively.

As an ABS employee, you are required to be vigilant about any risks to the security of ABS information and other official resources.

You are also bound by the secrecy and confidentiality obligations of the Census & Statistics Act (1905).

You should continually assess risks to ABS data, resources and information. Report any change of circumstance or suspicious event or discuss with your line manager, or Security.

Some duties may not be suitable for telework. Read the Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines (Paragraph 69) for more details.

Managers and employees must take steps to ensure that work which represents an unacceptable risk to the ABS is not undertaken when teleworking.

Keeping safe and secure when teleworking

The same security measures that apply when in the office apply when teleworking. More information can be found in the Security Awareness Essential Learning module. Below are some specific things to consider in relation to teleworking.

Market Sensitive Information (MSI)

The ABS Protective Security Policy Framework details the mandatory requirements for working on MSI while teleworking. In addition to MSI approvals, your teleworking agreement must also be approved by the designated teleworking delegate.

- Before you can access MSI while teleworking, the General Manager, Economy and Environment Division will need to approve your access. To obtain access [submit a request form through Services@ABS.\(opens in a new tab\)](#)
- Access to MSI should only occur in the location listed in the approved Teleworking agreement and must not be done in public places.
- All remote access and use of sensitive databases is monitored.

Other sensitive or higher classified information

Information, assets or documents that are classified as Sensitive, or Higher, should not be held in hard copy outside of an ABS office.

Don't put it down, put it away.

Remember the Clear Desk and Clear Screen policy. Your workstation must be free of any visible sensitive or classified information as well as valuable or attention-drawing assets.

Don't leave your laptop/tablet where it is easily accessible or visible from the outside of your car or home.

Security updates aren't just for your laptop

If your circumstances change, check in with your manager. For security purposes, this can include new roles, new work, new home office set up and more.

- **For example:** the risk profile for a single-occupant telework site is lower compared to a shared or group house. So new practices and measures may need to be implemented if you gain a boarder, or tenant.

If changes happen, this doesn't mean that the FWA will need to stop. You, your line manager and your Delegate will need to be satisfied that appropriate controls are in place to ensure that you can continue to work safely and securely.

Health, safety and wellbeing while teleworking

Wherever you are working, you need to look out for any work health and safety hazards that could be present. Let's explore some of the different hazards and what to do. Click each image below.

Remember: If you come across a hazard, do something to eliminate it. If it's not possible to eliminate a hazard, do something to control it.

- Do not overload power outlets.
- Inspect equipment regularly for damage.
- Avoid plugging heaters into extension cords.
- Avoid running cords under carpet or rugs.
- Check smoke alarms regularly and change batteries yearly.
- Avoid placing paper and other combustibles near heaters or sources of fire.
- Be mindful of cords, rugs and other tripping hazards.
- Pay attention to surroundings and changes in weather.

Emergencies and teleworking

In case of emergency

Emergencies happen and it is important to be prepared. Make sure you are ready.

Read the following tips to help keep you safe when teleworking.

Fire safety

- Install compliant smoke detectors at the telework site.
- Test them regularly.
- Change batteries yearly.

Emergency information

- Become familiar with local emergency warning websites to monitor emergency situations.

Planning is key

- Have a plan to safely exit from the telework site.

First aid

- Have first-aid supplies available at the teleworking location. Make sure that they are changed regularly, as they do expire.
- Consider completing a First Aid Resources Assessment in conjunction with your line manager. You can find this in the ABS First Aid Guidelines.

Know who to call

- Have the contact details to the closest medical services.
- In an emergency, remember you can call 000.

Responding to an emergency situation?

When responding to an emergency situation, employees should notify their line manager who should then inform National Property and Office Services. This means that emergency channels including the 1800 number can be updated.

Any variations to this approach will be detailed in your local office emergency response procedures.

Workstation set up and maintenance

Let's look at how you can setup and maintain your workstation so that you can work safely and productively.

Equipment

The ABS strongly recommends you use an external monitor, keyboard and mouse.

- Make sure you check your keyboard and mouse placement as well as monitor height, and if necessary, use a monitor raiser.

- If you have a keyboard or mouse at work that has been recommended by an Occupational Therapist, you may wish to take these home with you to use on your teleworking days.

The ABS provides a carry bag to protect the laptop, however you may prefer to carry it in another bag or a backpack, particularly when commuting.

Setup

Workstations must be set up correctly, and you must use a safe posture when you work at your computer. This will minimise the risk of musculoskeletal problems.

Before starting work each day, make sure your setup is safe and comfortable. For further information, refer to the [Safe Work Checklist](#)(opens in a new tab) and/or [Safe Workstation Setup](#).

Stretching, movement and discomfort

Pain or Discomfort

If you experience pain or discomfort, or accidentally injure yourself - whether in the office or when teleworking - and this does not improve after reviewing your setup and posture, make sure to:

- Stop doing what is causing you pain or discomfort.
- Advise your line manager as soon as possible.
- Submit an Incident Report in the Incident Reporting and Early Intervention System (IREIS). You can find this via ABS Links > Assistants > IREIS.

Injury

If you are injured while teleworking:

- Treat the injury immediately. Minor injuries may be treated from home. For more significant injuries, seek medical attention or contact 000 in an emergency.
- Inform your line manager as soon as possible.
- Submit an Incident Report in the Incident Reporting and Early Intervention System (IREIS). You can find this via ABS Links > Assistants > IREIS.

What can you do to reduce eye strain?

- Reduce glare caused by natural light coming in through windows and doors by using curtains or blinds, and the positioning of your desk.
- Consider the amount and evenness of lighting over your work area as well as the number, type, design and position of light sources.
- Eliminate shadows; this could include using an adjustable task lamp.

Rest and Stretch software

Install Rest and Stretch software to remind yourself to take regular breaks from sitting, typing and mouse work, and to perform stretches.

Take a break

Consistent with taking breaks in the office, you need to remind yourself to do the same when teleworking. The opportunities for a five-minute break every hour may be different from what you would do in the office. For example:

- Take a walk to the kitchen to get a glass of water.
- Stand up and move about your office when you are on the phone where you do not need to use a headset.

Work / Home boundaries

Your living arrangements are unique and it is important to establish boundaries that support a healthy work/life balance. Here are some possible scenarios and boundaries to consider:

"I am in a meeting"

Other members of your family may think of you as 'being at home' when you are teleworking and they may have expectations of you. It is important that there is an understanding of your work status and respect for the privacy you will require to undertake your work for the ABS.

Roommates or carer responsibilities

The co-habitation arrangements in your home may introduce extra work health and safety risks into your teleworking work environment that you will need to manage. You, your line manager and Delegate will need to consider any carer responsibilities you may have in assessing the suitability of teleworking in your circumstances.

Switch into work mode

Get showered and dressed as though you're going to the office. This act can create a mental shift which helps to get in the zone.

"Maybe I'll just stay on to finish this report"

Avoid the temptations to 'just finish off' some work that can wait until tomorrow.

"I haven't spoken with anyone today"

Keep connected with your team members so that you do not feel isolated when teleworking.

If your home situation changes, discuss this with your line manager. Adjustments may be made.

Managers and Teleworking arrangements

As a manager in the ABS, it is your responsibility to ensure that the work program is being successfully delivered and the employee is delivering on their work program (regardless of where they are working from).

Even if you are not currently a manager, it is important to understand the roles, responsibilities and obligations of managers.

What should Sarah do?

As a manager, Sarah has an employee (Adib) who is not fully delivering on their work program. What steps might Sarah take to make sure Adib can continue to support the work program?

I am really not sure what to do here... Adib is constantly showing as "Away" and hasn't sent me through the latest paper. This is becoming a habit. What should I do?

Identify the specific issue and the impact of this. Yes, I should take a moment and consider the specific issue and impact.

Now that I am clear on what the issue is and its impact, what should I do?

Have a constructive discussion with Adib and re-establish expectations. I should have a clear conversation with Adib. I will make sure that I provide specific examples. I'll update my line manager and, if necessary, seek advice from People Management and Wellbeing.

Adib and I caught up last week. I think it's time to check in with them to see how they are getting on.

Outcome 1: Adib has not applied any of the feedback. I wonder why? I should check in with my line manager about which next steps are appropriate in the circumstances. If necessary, I will seek advice from People Management and Wellbeing.

So, there are still some problems. It might be time to escalate.

Check in with your employees early to understand the why, make sure they have what they need to succeed and can work effectively. Keep your manager in the loop and when necessary, reach out to PMaW.

Actively engage with your employees. Work together for success!

Regular check-ins and early intervention is key to sustaining high performance.

Managing flexible working arrangements

As managers, actively managing flexible working arrangements will help you work with your employee to ensure that you are providing them with the appropriate level of support and that they are able to continue to work effectively and support the broader work program.

See how you can approve, review and cease (where necessary) teleworking arrangements.

Approving Teleworking Arrangements

Before you sign off on a teleworking agreement, you must be confident that your employee can work from home without significant risk. To do this, apply your understanding of the relevant procedures and guidelines, and read through their proposed teleworking agreement and Work, Health and Safety checklist.

Here are some of the main considerations.

- Does your employee have the appropriate equipment and technology to meet the requirements of their role safely?
- Do the photos provided show that the workstation meets current ergonomic practices (as available on Services@ABS)?
- Does your employee understand that even when they are working from home they are required to follow any reasonable direction given to them by the ABS to ensure their safety?
- Does your employee know how to submit incidents and hazard reports when teleworking?
- Are you aware of events that may impact the safety of your employee? It is important that the ABS supports employees to stay safe in these situations.
- Does your employee understand what to do if they have a change to their personal / work circumstances?

Reviewing Telework Arrangements

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) should be reviewed regularly to ensure that eligibility requirements and the guidelines are being met.

Teleworking, as part of an FWA, will be reviewed by the ABS and the employee after 12 months (or a shorter period, if agreed by the employee). This is to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangement.

DPA discussions offer a good point to have chat about the employee's FWA and to help you and your employee make sure that the FWA works for both of you, here is what you must cover:

- Is the telework site suitable for the work?
- Is the employee able to maintain the quality of their performance and outputs?
- Does the FWA support the broader team to successfully deliver the work program?
- Is the communication and collaboration effective?

Remember: You should also review an employee's FWA when there is a change in their work or personal circumstances.

Ceasing Telework Arrangements

Situations that may lead a manager or Delegate to seek to vary, pause or terminate a formal Telework Agreement include, but are not limited to where:

- a review of a Telework Agreement identifies it no longer supports the business requirements of the ABS
- there is demonstrated and repeated failure to comply with the agreed telework arrangements
- significant security or work health and safety risks are identified that cannot be resolved
- performance concerns are not able to be resolved while teleworking
- an employee has a medical condition, or where there is an active workers compensation case with rehabilitation support under the Fitness for Duty guidelines, and medical advice recommends an alteration to office attendance patterns.

Where a manager or Delegate seeks to vary, pause or terminate a formal Telework Agreement it must be managed in accordance with paragraphs 22 to 27 of the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.

Disputes related to Teleworking will be handled in accordance with the [Resolving Workplace Issues & Dispute Resolution Guidelines](#).

Work, health and safety

The ability to telework allows employees to seek agreement for the days they would like to attend the office and which days they would like to work from home. As a manager, it is important that you ensure this arrangement meets the operational requirements of your work area.

Test your management skills! How many of the below can you tick off the list?

I am aware of my employee's workload.

Too much, or not enough work can lead to poor work habits. This can have a negative impact on safety, such as working long past a time they would normally leave the office.

I know what days my employee will be in the office / at home.

So you can act quickly and effectively in the case of a WHS incident.

I encourage people to take regular breaks.

When teleworking, there are often less distractions, and it can be easy to not realise how much time has passed working on a task and continue working a long time without a break.

I maintain connection with my employees by catching up regularly.

Working from home for long periods of time can lead to a lack of connectedness and a decrease in motivation. This is especially important for geographically dispersed teams.

s 22

Advice on establishing formal teleworking arrangement in the ABS.

The ABS Teleworking Agreement has been replaced by Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA). Please refer to the [Flexible Working Arrangements Dashboard \(https://services.infra.abs.gov.au/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0017655\)](https://services.infra.abs.gov.au/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0017655).

To have teleworking approved on your Flexible Working Arrangement, you must have:

1. Read the [Flexible Working Arrangement Policy](#) ([Notes://NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8/1.%20Manuals%20%5C%201.%20Released/367465E36955FFCACA2567F40025](https://Notes/NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8/1.%20Manuals%20%5C%201.%20Released/367465E36955FFCACA2567F40025)) and the [Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines](#) (<http://goto/Notes://NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8//7AA5792614C5D3C9CA2567F400242033>).
2. Had a discussion with your line manager about your intention to establish a FWA which involves teleworking. Refer to [Flexible Working Arrangements - Frequently Asked Questions \(https://services.infra.abs.gov.au/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0013364\)](#).
3. Completed the [compulsory eLearning - Teleworking in the ABS \(https://learning.abs.gov.au/course/view.php?id=1653\)](#) or ensure it has been completed within the preceding 2 years.
4. Completed the Teleworking Agreement form (attached).

If you require further assistance, please contact PMaW by creating a Services@ABS Ticket [Query regarding flexible working arrangements. \(https://services.infra.abs.gov.au/sp?id=sc_cat_item&sys_id=2ac15161283b5a103ddc3e12ba8d21db&referrer=related_items\)](https://services.infra.abs.gov.au/sp?id=sc_cat_item&sys_id=2ac15161283b5a103ddc3e12ba8d21db&referrer=related_items).



Revised by s 22
Last modified 8 months ago

TELEWORK AGREEMENT

Part A - Applicant Declaration

Employment Type	Ongoing		
Employee Name:		AGS Number:	
Division/Branch/Section:			
Manager's Name:			
Delegate's Name			
Period of Agreement: (Maximum 2 years)		to	
Usual number of days <u>per fortnight</u> working from the telework site (between 1 and 10 inclusive):		Days	
Telework site address:			
Telework telephone:		or	
I have attached photographs of the proposed telework site in Part E of this application – Select “Yes”		Photos must be attached	
Please do not attach other sensitive personal information, for example, medical certificates.			
I work on Market Sensitive Information (MSI)	No		
1. I have read the <i>Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines</i> and agree to adhere to the guidelines and all other relevant ABS and APS policies and procedures, including actively managing health and safety, ICT equipment and security while working under this Telework Agreement. 2. I have completed the relevant teleworking e-learning course within the last 2 years, completed “Part B – Applicant Telework Checklist” of this application form and have appended photographs of my telework work site to this application at Part E. 3. I acknowledge that I can be audited at any time. If required I will give reasonable access to the telework site to relevant officers of the ABS. 4. I acknowledge that failure to comply with the provisions of the guidelines, policies and procedures may result in the termination of this Agreement at any time. 5. I declare that the information I have supplied is a true representation of the location that I would undertake teleworking from. I am aware that if I intentionally mislead ABS with regard to responses on this form I may be placing myself at risk of an injury and may be in breach of my obligations under the <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i>, ABS IT and security policies and the APS Code of Conduct.			
Employee signature (type name)		Date:	

Part B - Applicant Telework Checklist

The following checklist is supported by the mandatory *Flexible Working in the ABS* e-learning course in Capability Plus, the additional resources in Capability Plus, the Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines and associated Knowledge Documents in Services@ABS. Additional assistance can be provided by raising an Incident Ticket in Services@ABS – Flexible Working Environment Administration (Incidence Area)

Check the box for “Yes” – comments for the delegate can be added in the right-hand column

Flexible Working			
1	I understand what is meant by the term “Teleworking”	☐	
2	I understand the difference between Informal Teleworking and Formal Teleworking	☐	
3	I know where to find information on teleworking, what I need to do to apply for a Telework Agreement, and where to get additional information and assistance	☐	
4	I understand that my Telework Agreement will be reviewed regularly and in what circumstances	☐	
5	My teleworking ‘office’ is situated where it is free from distraction from others	☐	
6	I understand and can meet the expectations required to telework	☐	
7	I understand that I am required to undertake a self-assessment of my teleworking site	☐	
8	I understand what the ABS means by the term “virtual environment”	☐	
9	I understand the importance of communication for maintaining team cohesion	☐	
10	I recognise an individual’s responsibilities in a virtual team	☐	
11	I can identify when a virtual team is operating well and how to take corrective action when it is not	☐	
12	I understand my responsibilities to ensure that I am available whilst teleworking	☐	
13	I understand and can use the technologies required by the ABS to ensure that working virtually is successful	☐	
14	My teleworking site has the necessary technology and support services to allow me to work remotely	☐	
15	I understand how to manage problems with IT and their resolution	☐	
16	I have developed a communication plan with my manager and recognise its relationship with the Teams broader communication plans/strategy	☐	

Teleworking and Security			
1	I understand my security responsibilities in the office and apply them at the teleworking site.	☐	
2	I will ensure that my ABS laptop and other equipment is as safe as possible from damage and theft whilst in my teleworking environment.	☐	
3	I will be conscious to lock my screen when I am not working to ensure no unauthorised persons can access the ABS IT environment and information.	☐	
4	I will not take any hard copy material with a Dissemination Limiting Marker (DLM) or security classification to my telework site	☐	
5	I understand the security classifications of material used by the ABS. Before working offsite on any material that may be sensitive (for example Market Sensitive Information) I will obtain written approval from the accountable General Manager/s.	☐	
6	My teleworking 'space' is private and away from others in the house and what I am working on cannot be seen or conversations overheard	☐	
7	I understand my responsibility and how to report a security incident when it happens	☐	
Work Health and Safety			
1	I can identify a range of physical/ergonomic considerations that may impact on my health and wellbeing when teleworking	☐	
2	I have set up my workstation at home correctly to minimise risk of problems with muscles and bones, reducing the risk of incorrect posture and reducing eye strain	☐	
3	I am aware that I need to manage any hazards while teleworking by implementing controls or, if possible, eliminating them	☐	
4	I am aware of potential psychological impacts associated with working remotely and I am aware of what to do to minimise potential risks	☐	
5	I am aware of the need to have healthy work practices such as taking regular breaks from keyboarding, sitting correctly, and staying connected with my manager and team	☐	
6	I understand my WHS reporting responsibility and how to report WHS hazards and incidents in IRIES	☐	
Emergency Management			
1	I have familiarised myself with my local emergency warning websites to monitor emergency situations	☐	
2	I have identified my route(s) of exit from the telework site	☐	
3	I have smoke detectors installed at the telework site compliant with state laws and understand the requirement to test them	☐	
4	I have first aid supplies available at the telework site and have the contact details of my closest medical service	☐	
5	I will follow directions from my local state emergency services	☐	
6	I will complete an IREIS report as soon as practical after any event	☐	

Employee to email this form to their manager to complete Part C

Part C - Manager Recommendation (Not required if the manager is also the Delegate)

1. I have read the <i>Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines</i> and agree to adhere to the guidelines and all other relevant ABS and APS policies and procedures including actively managing health and safety, ICT equipment and security. 2. I have completed the relevant teleworking e-learning course within the preceding 2 years. 3. I confirm that the applicant has undertaken the required e-learning and completed the Teleworking Checklist. 4. I have reviewed this application and discussed with the applicant and am satisfied that they have met the requirements necessary to undertake telework and I recommend approval of this agreement.			
Manager Signature: (type name)		Date:	

If recommending approval, Manager to email this form to the Delegate to complete Part D

If not recommending approval, Manager to email this form with reasons for non-approval to the Employee

Part D - Delegate Approval

1. I have read the <i>Teleworking in the ABS Guidelines</i> and agree to adhere to the guidelines and all other relevant ABS and APS policies and procedures including actively managing health and safety, ICT equipment and security. 2. I have completed the relevant teleworking e-learning course within the preceding 2 years. 3. I confirm that the applicant has undertaken the required e-learning and completed the Teleworking Checklist. 4. I have reviewed this application and am satisfied that the employee has met the requirements necessary to undertake telework and I approve this agreement.			
Employee Name:			
Delegate Signature: (type name)		Date:	
A delegate must be EL2 or above. If working on Market Sensitive Information (MSI) the delegate is Program Manager. Approval by the General Manager Economy and Environment Division (EED) must be obtained through the MSI Access request form on Services @ ABS prior to accessing MSI from home.			

If approved, Delegate to email this form to paes.at.abs.wdb@abs.gov.au with copies to the Employee and Manager

If not approved, Delegate to email this form with reasons for non-approval to the Employee and Manager

Part E – Telework Site Photographs

Attach photographs to this page below the line – use the “Insert / Pictures” menu function

Released under FOI Act

Manual ID - No &
Title:

MPM - 01. ABS Manual of Personnel Management

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Section No. & Title: 01. Flexible working arrangements

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- Body field changed : 15 characters added

The authority for flexible working arrangements in the ABS comes from the *ABS Enterprise Agreement 2024- 2027* [Notes Link](#)

notes:///CA255E8A0003F1E8/4A255F5F001BDA094A255E1B0024B8B6/B217775FE7841432CA25674C0027CC53 clauses 201 to 228.

ABS Commitment

1. The ABS recognises the important role flexible working arrangements play in balancing employees' personal and working lives. ABS is committed to the right for employees to request access to flexible work arrangements and building a culture that supports flexible working arrangements across all levels.
2. To achieve this the ABS commits to:
 - a. Considering requests for formal flexible working arrangements on a case-by-case basis, with a bias towards approving requests, and
 - b. for First Nations employees, considering connection to country and cultural obligations in responding to requests for altering the location of work.

Purpose

3. The purpose of this policy and related guidelines is to ensure that:
 - a. All employees understand what Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) may include and how to request an FWA.
 - b. All employees understand their obligations and responsibilities in relation to FWAs.
 - c. There are clear governance arrangements in place.

Scope

4. This policy applies to all ABS employees covered by the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Flexible Working Arrangements

5. Flexibility applies to all roles in the ABS. Different types of flexible working arrangements may apply or be suitable for different types of roles and, or circumstances.
6. Flexible working arrangements (FWA) include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Changes to hours of work – for example changes to start and finish times, compressed hours, or part-time working arrangements.
 - b. Patterns of work – for example split shifts.
 - c. Locations of work – for example working from home for part of your work pattern or transferring to a new office location.

7. Different types of flexibility apply to every role in the ABS, and all employees are entitled to make a request for an FWA. The type of flexible arrangements available to an employee will depend on the requirements of their role, meaning not all types of flexibility will be appropriate for all roles in the ABS.

Requesting Flexible Working Arrangements

8. Requests for flexible working arrangements (FWAs) will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the individual circumstances of the employee with a bias towards approving requests, subject to operational requirements and appropriate controls. Bias towards approving requests means that the ABS will approve FWA requests unless it is unreasonable to do so.

9. A request for a formal flexible working arrangement must:

- a. be in writing;
- b. set out details of the change sought (including the type of arrangement sought and the proposed period the arrangement will operate for); and
- c. set out the reasons for the request, noting the reasons for the request may relate to the circumstances set out at [section 65\(1A\)](#) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (FW Act).
- d. outline how you will maintain an active connection to the work area and office.
- e. for employees with management responsibilities, also outline how they will contribute to staff development and building a supportive workplace culture.

10. If a request does not meet the criteria set out in clause 9 a-c, it will not be considered a formal request, and therefore is not subject to the formal response process.

Responding to requests for Flexible Working Arrangements

11. Before responding to any FWA requests, the delegate must read any relevant associated guidelines (e.g. Telework) and satisfy themselves that the requirements of the guideline(s) have been addressed.

12. The Australian Statistician or their delegate (Delegate) must provide a written response to a request within 21 days of receiving the request.

13. Before providing a response, the Delegate is to take into consideration:

- a. suitability of work undertaken;
- b. management and supervision requirements;
- c. health and safety responsibilities and requirements;
- d. confidentiality and security requirements;

- e. if the FWA arrangement may have significant adverse impact on the work of the employee or other employees within the work group;
- f. the consequences of refusal for the employee;
- g. any costs or significant impact on delivery of the work program;
- h. any impacts on ABS workplace culture and connection;
- i. the proposed commencement date; and
- j. for First Nations employees, the ABS must consider connection to country and cultural obligations in responding to requests for altering the location of work.

14. If approved, the delegate must state that the request has been approved and set out:

- a. any security and work health and safety requirements;
- b. a review date 12-months from the date of the agreement, or earlier if agreed by the employee;
- c. The cost of establishment (if any).

15. If, after consideration, the work area cannot accommodate the FWA as requested, but an alternative arrangement is discussed with and agreed by the employee, the response should also set out the agreed changes from the original request.

16. An FWA request can only be refused if:

- a. the request has been discussed with the employee;
- b. there have been genuine attempts to reach an agreement with the employee about making changes to the employee's working arrangements to accommodate their circumstances and there has been no agreement reached;
- c. the consequences of the refusal for the employee have been considered; and
- d. the refusal is on reasonable business grounds (see paragraphs 18 to 19).

17. If an FWA request is refused, the response must include:

- a. detailed reasons for the refusal;
- b. the business grounds for refusal, and an explanation of how those grounds apply to the request;
- c. set out the changes (other than the requested change) in the employee's working arrangements that would accommodate, to any extent, the employee's circumstances outlined in the request and that the agency would be willing to make; or state there are no such changes; and
- d. Advice that the decision to refuse is subject to dispute resolution procedures of the enterprise agreement, and if the employee is an eligible employee under the FW Act, the dispute resolution procedures outlined in sections 65B and 65C of the FW Act.

Reasonable Business Grounds

18. What counts as reasonable business grounds for refusing a request for flexible working arrangements will depend on the individual circumstances, including the nature and size of the work area, the employee's role and duties and the requested arrangements.
19. Reasonable business grounds may include, but are not limited to:
- a. the requested working arrangements could not be accommodated without significant changes to security requirements;
 - b. the requested working arrangements create work health and safety risks that cannot be reasonably mitigated;
 - c. the requested working arrangements would be too costly;
 - d. there would likely be a significant loss in efficiency or productivity;
 - e. there is no capacity to change the working arrangements of other employees to accommodate the request;
 - f. it would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other employees, or to recruit new employees, to accommodate the request;
 - g. there would likely be significant negative impact on customer service;
 - h. there would likely be a significant negative impact on the employee's ability to maintain an active connection to the work area and office, or to contribute to ABS culture and inclusion;
 - i. for employees with management responsibilities, there would likely be a negative impact on their ability to contribute to employee development and building a supportive workplace environment.
 - j. the requested working arrangements would likely prevent effective participation in coaching, mentoring and training.

Reviewing Flexible Work Arrangements

20. Approved FWAs will be reviewed by the ABS and the employee after 12 months, or a shorter period, if agreed by the employee. This is to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangement.

Varying, Pausing or Terminating Flexible Working Arrangements

21. An employee may request to make an ongoing variation to an approved FWA. The variation of a formal flexible working arrangement constitutes a new FWA request and is therefore subject to the formal request and response process. An employee may also request to pause or terminate an approved flexible working arrangement.

22. A Delegate may vary, pause or terminate an approved FWA:
- on reasonable business grounds;
 - where there is demonstrated and repeated failure to comply with the agreed arrangements;
 - where significant security or work health and safety risks are identified;
 - where performance concerns are not resolved (see paragraph 25 to 27).
23. Prior to the Delegate varying, pausing or terminating the arrangement, the ABS must have:
- discussed with the employee their intention to vary, pause or terminate the arrangement with the employee;
 - genuinely tried to reach an agreement with the employee about making changes to the employee's working arrangements to accommodate the employee's circumstances (subject to any reasonable business grounds for alteration);
 - had regard to the consequences of the variation, pause or termination for the employee;
 - ensured the variation, pause or termination is on reasonable business grounds; and
 - informed the employee in writing of the variation, pause or termination to the approved flexible working arrangement, including details set out in paragraph 20.
24. The Delegate must provide reasonable notice if varying, pausing or terminating a FWA without the agreement of the employee, having regard to the circumstances of the employee. Exceptions to this requirement are urgent and critical operational circumstances, WHS and/or Security risks, or an employee's demonstrated and repeated failure to comply with the agreed arrangements.

Varying a FWA due to performance concerns

25. Where a Delegate is considering varying, pausing or terminating an approved FWA due to performance concerns they should first seek to address underperformance through other measures.
26. Delegates should carefully consider whether it is appropriate to change an employee's flexible working arrangement due to underperformance. This consideration should focus on:
- the nature of the employee's role;
 - how performance or productivity can be measured in the role;
 - whether it can be demonstrated that the employee would benefit from changes to the flexible working arrangement; and
 - the individual circumstances of the employee.
27. For example, a Delegate may seek to vary an employee's working from home arrangement to better facilitate in-person supervision and coaching to improve an employee's performance.

Ad-Hoc Arrangements

28. Employees may request ad-hoc flexible working arrangements. Ad-hoc arrangements are generally one-off or short-term arrangements for circumstances that are not ongoing.
29. Employees should, where practicable, make the request in writing and provide as much notice as possible.
30. Requests for ad-hoc arrangements are not subject to the request and approval processes detailed in paragraphs 8 to 17. The ad-hoc arrangement should be documented with the elements of the FWA and period agreed. The ABS should consider ad-hoc requests on a case-by-case basis, with a bias to approving ad-hoc requests, having regard to the employee's circumstances and reasonable business grounds.
31. Where a regular pattern of requests for ad-hoc arrangements from an employee emerges, the ABS should consider whether it is appropriate to seek to formalise the arrangement with the employee.

Dispute Resolution

32. Disputes will be handled in accordance with the Resolving Workplace Issues and Dispute Resolution guidelines [Notes Link](#)

Related Guidelines

33. Other guidelines set out the details specific to different types of FWAs. This policy should be read in conjunction with related guidelines:

- 10-01-01 Flex time and Attendance [Notes Link](#)
- 10-01-02 Part Time working arrangements [Notes Link](#)
- 10-01-03 Teleworking in the ABS [Notes Link](#)

Roles and Responsibilities

All ABS Employees

- Be aware of and comply with the FWA requirements of the Enterprise Agreement, this policy and related Guidelines.

Managers, Supervisors and Assistant Directors and Directors

- Communicate requirements of this policy to workers.

- Ensure workers are made aware of and comply with the requirements of this policy.

Approving Delegates

- Respond to requests for FWA within the timeframe and in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement and the FWA Guidelines.

Released under FOI Act

The ABS Enterprise Agreement values flexibility and recognises the importance of balance between personal and working lives. We need to balance this flexibility with operational requirements and the impact on teams, the ABS as a whole and our responsibilities as public servants.

The ABS takes pride in offering flexible working arrangements. We support and encourage accessing arrangements such as part-time work, compressed work weeks, job sharing and non-standard hours of work.

- What is a Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA)?
- Who can apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement?
- How do I apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement?
- I have sensitive supporting documentation; do I need to provide it with my application?
- For what reasons can I apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement?
- What is the 'bias towards approving'?
- Can a Flexible Working Arrangement be refused?
- What if my request is refused?
- What are reasonable business grounds?
- Can I apply to work from home 100% of the time?
- Can I work from home 100% of the time, without a Flexible Working Arrangement?
- Do I need to apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement if I intend to work from the office 100% of the time?
- Can I work from home part days?
- Can I work outside of the ABS bandwidth?
- How long does the process take?
- Who is the Delegate for a Flexible Working Arrangement?
- Do I need a Flexible Working Arrangement if I have a Teleworking Agreement?
- What is the review period of a Flexible Working Arrangement?
- I am a contractor, does this apply to me?
- I am an ABS Interviewer, does this apply to me?
- Where can I go for more information?

What is a Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA)?

Flexible working arrangements include, but are not limited to:

- Changes to hours of work – for example changes to start and finish times, compressed hours, or part-time working arrangements.
- Patterns of work – for example split shifts.
- Locations of work – for example working from home for part of your work pattern or transferring to a new office location.

Who can apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement?

All ABS employees have the right to request a Flexible Working Arrangement.

How do I apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement?

Have a conversation with your Line Manager and put your request in writing to your approval Delegate:

- explaining the change being requested (including the timeframe for the request), and

- the reasons for this change.

I have sensitive supporting documentation; do I need to provide it with my application?

No. Sensitive personal information should not be appended to your Flexible Working Arrangement request. PMaW will be able to provide advice on information you need to provide a Delegate and alternative arrangements for sensitive personal information.

You are responsible for maintaining copies of your supporting documents, like you would a medical certificate or Statutory Declaration.

For what reasons can I apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement?

The [ABS Enterprise Agreement 2024-2027](#)

(<http://goto/Notes://NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8//B217775FE7841432CA25674C0027CC53>).

allows all ABS staff to be eligible to apply for a flexible working arrangement. Flexible work can help provide a balance between an employees' personal and working lives. Reasons for requesting an arrangement for this purpose would cover a wide range of reasons and will differ from employee to employee, depending on their circumstance. You can also request flexible working arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* if you:

- are pregnant
- are the parent, or have responsibility for the care, of a child who is school aged or younger
- are a carer (within the meaning of the Carer Recognition Act 2010)
- have a disability
- are 55 or older
- are experiencing family and domestic violence, or
- are caring for or supporting an immediate family or household member who requires care or support because they are experiencing family and domestic violence.

What is the 'bias towards approving'?

The ABS will approve requests where it is reasonable to do so.

The ABS will work with you to find a suitable arrangement that meets your needs, the operational requirements of your business area and maintains connection and engagement with your office and ABS culture.

Can a Flexible Working Arrangement be refused?

Yes, a request can be refused on reasonable business grounds.

The ABS will work with you to find a suitable arrangement that meets your needs, the operational requirements of your business area and maintains connection and engagement with your office and ABS culture.

What if my request is refused?

If, after discussion with your Line Manager, you cannot come to a suitable alternative arrangement, you can request a review, in accordance with the [Resolving Workplace Issues and Dispute Resolution guidelines](#)

(<http://goto/Notes://NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8//C37F4849BC325B12CA2567F40022CD84>).

What are reasonable business grounds?

Reasonable business grounds include, but are not limited to:

- a. the new working arrangements requested would be too costly for the ABS
- b. there is no capacity to change the working arrangements of other employees to accommodate the new working arrangements requested

- c. it would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other employees, or to recruit new employees, to accommodate the new working arrangements requested
- d. the new working arrangements requested would be likely to result in a significant loss in efficiency or productivity
- e. the new working arrangements requested would be likely to have a significant negative impact on customer service, and
- f. it would not be possible to accommodate the working arrangements without significant changes to security requirements, or where work health and safety risks cannot be mitigated.

Can I apply to work from home 100% of the time?

Yes. A request to work from home 100% of the time *may* be approved in exceptional circumstances.

ABS' general expectation continues to be that staff will spend at least 40% of their time in an ABS office and that we will take into account individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis when considering requests to access flexible arrangements.

Can I work from home 100% of the time, without a Flexible Working Arrangement?

No. Without a Flexible Working Arrangement, staff are expected to attend the office.

Do I need to apply for a Flexible Working Arrangement if I intend to work from the office 100% of the time?

No, if you are fulltime, working within core hours and the ABS bandwidth.

If you are working less than full time hours, you will need to have a flexible working arrangement.

Can I work from home part days?

Yes, if it meets the operational requirements of your business area.

All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking individual needs, role responsibilities, security and health considerations into account.

Can I work outside of the ABS bandwidth?

This would be dependent on the nature of the arrangement. All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking individual needs, role responsibilities, security, maintaining connection with staff you may supervise, colleagues and managers and health considerations into account.

The ABS recognises that regular office attendance and in-person interaction play an important role in maintaining a strong sense of connection and community.

How long does the process take?

The Delegate must respond to a written request within 21 days.

Who is the Delegate for a Flexible Working Arrangement?

The appropriate Delegate depends on the request. Refer to the attached [FWA Approval Delegations \(sys_attachment.do?sys_id=42225d38a0e0fa147cd3502f0172c604\)](#).

Do I need a Flexible Working Arrangement if I have a Teleworking Agreement?

Yes. From now, an approved FWA encompasses the Teleworking Agreement.

What is the review period of a Flexible Working Arrangement?

Approved flexible working arrangements will be reviewed by the ABS, and the employee, after 12 months, or a shorter period, if agreed by the employee. This is to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangement. Good practice would be to discuss any FWA's during Development and Performance Agreement feedback, to ensure they're still meeting the needs of the individual and business needs of the ABS.

I am a contractor, does this apply to me?

This advice has been prepared for staff engaged under the [ABS Enterprise Agreement 2024-2027](#)

(<http://goto/Notes://NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8//B217775FE7841432CA25674C0027CC53>).

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Where can I go for more information?

[ABS Enterprise Agreement 2024-2027](#)

(<http://goto/Notes://NotesACT08/CA255E8A0003F1E8//B217775FE7841432CA25674C0027CC53>).



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