

COVID-19 PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

UDIA MEMBER RESOURCE
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INTRODUCTION

We are navigating our way through exceptional circumstances.

The volume of information out there on how to respond to COVID-19 is overwhelming and not always relevant. UDIA has therefore curated this COVID-19 Pandemic Management Toolkit specifically for the development, building and construction industry, to help you cut through the noise and easily find the information most relevant to you during the global coronavirus pandemic.

We encourage you to distribute this document to your teams and colleagues, as it provides several useful links, tips and summaries of information that will help us all adapt to these challenging times.

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BUSINESS SUPPORT FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

The Australian Government has implemented measures to support businesses impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19). The support includes:

JobKeeper

Under the JobKeeper Payment, businesses impacted by COVID-19 can access a subsidy to continue paying their employees. The Government will provide a fortnightly payment of \$1,500 per eligible employee. [Click here for the latest information on JobKeeper.](#)

Employers can check their eligibility for the JobKeeper scheme by registering through the [ATO Website.](#)

Rent relief for commercial tenants

The Government has announced a range of measures to help renters, including a temporary hold on evictions and a mandatory code of conduct for commercial tenancies to support small and medium sized enterprises. [Click here for more information.](#)

Ensuring banks are well placed to lend - Australian Prudential Regulation Authority

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) has announced temporary changes to its expectations regarding bank capital ratios. The changes will support banks' lending to customers, particularly if they wish to take advantage of the new facility being offered by the RBA. [Click here for more information.](#)

Boosting cash flow for employers

Through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), the Government will provide tax-free cash flow boosts of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 to eligible businesses, delivered through credits in the activity statement system, when they lodge their activity statements. [Click here for more information.](#)

Increased Instant Asset Write-off

The instant asset write-off threshold has been increased from \$30,000 to \$150,000 and expanded access to include businesses with aggregated annual turnover of less than \$500 million (up from \$50 million). This applies from 12 March 2020 until 30 June 2020, for new or second-hand assets first used or installed ready for use in this timeframe. [Click here for more information.](#)

Backing business investment

Businesses with a turnover of less than \$500 million will be able to deduct 50 per cent of the cost of an eligible asset on installation, with existing depreciation rules applying to the balance of the asset cost. [Click here for more information.](#)

Supporting apprentices and trainees

If you employ an apprentice or trainee you may be eligible for a wage subsidy of 50 per cent of their wage. [Click here for more information.](#)

Increased and accelerated income support

The Government is temporarily expanding eligibility to income support payment. This supplement will be paid to both existing and new recipients of the eligible payment categories. The expanded eligibility applies to: sole traders, the self-employed, casual workers and contract workers who meet the income tests as a result of the economic downturn due to the coronavirus. [Click here for more information.](#)

Coronavirus SME Guarantee Scheme

Under the Scheme, the Government will provide a guarantee of 50 per cent to small and medium enterprise (SME) lenders for new unsecured loans to be used for working capital. This will enhance these lenders' willingness and ability to provide credit, which will result in SMEs being able to access additional funding to help support them through the upcoming months. [Click here for more information.](#)

Supporting the flow and reducing the cost of credit - Reserve Bank of Australia

The RBA has announced a term funding facility for the banking system. Banks will have access to at least \$90 billion in funding at a fixed interest rate of 0.25 per cent. This will reinforce the benefits of a low cash rate by reducing funding costs for banks, which in

turn will help reduce interest rates for borrowers. To encourage lending to businesses, the facility offers additional low-cost funding to banks if they expand their business lending, with particular incentives applying to new loans to SMEs. [Click here for more information.](#)

Tax support from the ATO

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) will provide administrative relief for certain tax obligations for taxpayers affected by the coronavirus outbreak, on a case-by-case basis. This includes:

- Low interest payment plans
- Payment deferrals
- Monthly GST credits
- Pay as you go instalments
- Remitting interest and penalties
- Simplifying home office deduction rules

[Click here for more information.](#)

BUSINESS SUPPORT FROM THE NSW GOVERNMENT

The NSW Government has established an economic survival package to support Victorian businesses and workers as they deal with the impacts of COVID-19. The package complements the work of the Federal Government and includes:

Payroll tax

NSW Government has put in place tax relief measures including:

- Deferring payroll tax for all businesses until October 2020.
- A 25 per cent reduction in payroll tax for businesses with grouped Australian wages of \$10million or less
- Increasing the Tax Free Threshold to \$1 million for the 20/21 Financial Year

[Read more here.](#)

Land tax relief

Eligible commercial or residential landlords may apply for land tax relief, which may include:

- reduce up to 25% of your 2020 land tax liability
- defer your land tax payments by up to 3 months
- provide a refund on the amount of rent reduction you've given a tenant, or
- reduce the amount of 2020 land tax payable if you have not yet completed payment.

[Check your availability online.](#)

AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACE LAWS

The information provided below is to help us all get a clearer understanding of employer and employee rights and obligations during the coronavirus pandemic.

EMPLOYER RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS – JOBKEEPER

To support the implementation and operation of the JobKeeper scheme in Australian workplaces, temporary provisions have been added to the Fair Work Act (Fair Work Act JobKeeper provisions). They apply to employers who have qualified for the JobKeeper scheme and their eligible employees.

JobKeeper qualifying employers may give eligible employees a direction to reduce their hours or days of work (including to no hours) in certain circumstances. These directions are referred to as either a 'JobKeeper enabling stand down direction' or a 'direction' on this page and span the following options.

Flexible work options

Based on the type of work the employee is undertaking, below are several flexible work options:

- working from home
- a decrease of employee's hours
- altered roster arrangements
- modification to an employees usual work tasks

Standing down employees

Standing down employees may be necessary for your business to survive financially. Employees stood down still remain employed by their company during this period. The government are allowing employers to stand down employees for a number of reasons including:

- business closure due to an enforceable government direction
- majority of the workforce is in self-isolation making it inoperable for the remaining employees to do their jobs.
- Lack of work due to insufficient amount of out-sourced supplies.

Ending employment

If other options are not feasible or have been exhausted, businesses suffering a downturn may need to consider redundancy for some employees. Employers must comply with any applicable requirements upheld by Fair Work (e.g. applicable awards redundancies measures, any enterprise agreements, employment contracts, etc).

[Click here for more information on JobKeeper enabling stand down directions.](#)

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Business bankruptcy

If you are an employee who loses their job due to your employer business going bankrupt or into liquidation, you may not be able to claim wage payments or entitlements from your employer. If this happens, you may receive help through the [Fair Entitlements Guarantee](#). When a business is not put into liquidation but abandoned, you may be able to seek help from the [Australian Securities and Investments Commission](#) (ASIC) to help recover any unpaid employment entitlements.

Ending employment

The Fair Work Act protects employees from being dismissed for a number of reasons. Employees cannot be dismissed due to discrimination, a temporary away period due to illness (such as coronavirus), made redundant for any reason that is considered harsh, unjust/unreasonable, or protected by another right.

[Click here for more information on coronavirus and Australian workplace laws.](#)

PANDEMIC LEAVE

Pandemic leave allows employees to take either 2 weeks' unpaid leave or allows employees to double their annual leave accumulated by undertaking half pay leave. This will only be eligible for certain awards and employees.

[Click here to learn more about pandemic leave.](#)

COMMUNICATING IN CRISIS

Effective communication is critical to ensuring that relationships with key stakeholders are maintained during the current pandemic and beyond.

Stakeholders need to maintain confidence in your organisation for the duration. How your organisation is represented through communication during this time will provide an important insight for key stakeholders into how effectively your organisation is able to respond and pivot accordingly. This will have implications for your organisation once we move into recovery phase.

The following section provides advice for how to effectively communicate with your organisation's key stakeholders during this time.

Identify your crisis communications team

First, identify who in your organisation will be involved with developing and executing the communications strategy during the crisis period.

Generally the team will consist of members of the organisation's leadership team and those that specialise in communications.

Depending on the size of the organisation and the impact of the current pandemic, an organisation may look to engage external consultants and/or legal counsel to assist with executing an effective crisis communications strategy.

In identifying your crisis communications team, it is also important to ensure you appoint a spokesperson who is well trained in effective communication, including with media if required.

Developing a crisis communication strategy

A crisis communications strategy provides a clear framework for delivering an organisation's key messages to stakeholders in order to achieve specific objectives.

Different to your organisation's broader communications strategy, a crisis or COVID-19 communications strategy provides key messaging and a framework for delivering messages specific to the current situation. This strategy is likely to include alternative communications platforms, particularly digital platforms, that your organisation may not have previously prioritised.

The strategy can include internal and external communications, however depending on the size and type of organisation, you are likely to require a separate strategy for internal (staff) and external stakeholders.

It is critical that all staff who are responsible or involved in communicating to your organisation's key stakeholders are familiar with the strategy and importantly, the key messages that must be delivered on a consistent basis.

A crisis communications strategy should cover the following:

- Identify measurable goals and objectives of the strategy including timeframes
- Identify key stakeholders
- Outline key messages of the organisation during the current pandemic
- Outline channels and tactics that will be utilised to communicate key messages
- Allocate responsibility for each item

Things to consider when communicating in crisis

1. Stick to the facts

Honesty and integrity should be paramount for any organisation, however ensuring that your messaging is truthful and based on facts is absolutely critical at this time. Sticking to the facts will ensure you maintain a reputation as a reliable source of information for stakeholders.

2. Walk the talk

Deliver on promises. If you communicate something to stakeholders or commit to an action, then you must deliver. If you can't deliver then you must be open and transparent about why.

3. Speed of communication

In an era of social media and instant news, it is important to ensure that clear and accurate communications are delivered quickly and efficiently. You want your organisation to be one of, if not the first, source of information that stakeholders are hearing from.

4. Empathy

Today, it is no longer expected for organisations to reflect 'old school' stoicism or an unemotional response to a crisis situation. Showing empathy and caring for how your stakeholders may be impacted and then having the competence and expertise to respond with honesty and commitment/ dedication is of utmost priority.

5. Relevance – no spam please!

While keeping in regular contact with stakeholders is important, remember that people are being inundated with information and communications in relation to COVID-19 from myriad sources. There are endless avenues for contacting people, keep it relevant and ensure that any communication is necessary and to the point.

6. Keep up to date

Ensure that you are keeping track of the latest information and advice to ensure that your messages are on point and relevant.

MANAGING PRODUCTIVITY & MOOD

In partnership with the Future of Leadership, UDIA presented the [*Leading Through Crisis*](#) webinar series to arm industry with the tools and insights to lead and manage through this uncertain time.

PRODUCTIVITY – WORKING FROM HOME

Top tips for employers

- Produce procedure and plan documents for employees to follow, so everyone is clear on what is expected while working from home arrangements are in place.
- Trust that your employees are working as expected; avoid micro-managing or testing employees who are delivering on agreed outcomes.
- Include employees in the decision-making process where appropriate. This can eliminate employee uncertainty and confusion, while showing you value their views and opinions.
- Create some fun for employees. Working from home lacks the fun communal energy that employees get from their usual working location.

Top tips for employers and employees

- If possible, set out a 'work zone'. Only use this zone to complete work during your set working hours. This will help shift your mindset from a 'relaxing home space' to 'a productive office space'.
- Ensure you have the necessary tools to complete work effectively.
- Start the day with a quick team meeting. This will help everyone feel less isolated, clearly set out the goals and tasks to be achieved that day and gives everyone the opportunity to ask questions or raise any concerns.
- Try the 'Pomodoro Technique', which includes 25 minutes of non-distracted working, five minute break and then repeat.

EMOTIONAL HYGIENE

It is important for leaders to recognise that your emotional state does not solely affect you. In times of crisis like a global pandemic, try to remind yourself that this is out of your control and the best thing you can do for your team is stay calm. Fear can kill

capability – fear will likely reduce a team’s ability to focus and stay productive. It can compromise teamwork, compassion for one another and increase stress that leads to errors.

Top tips

- Acknowledge your emotions; don’t ignore or suppress them.
- Switch your mental state and pivot your thinking to positive outcomes.
- Take time out to breathe, break free from the “whirlwind” and the noise.
- Tune into and validate your team’s emotions to build connections. Sharing your feelings and being transparent will help build these connections with your team.

MENTAL HEALTH

According to [Safe Work Australia](#), employers should be mindful of the common psychosocial hazards that could result in an employee suffering a mental strain:

- Isolated work
- Low amount of support
- Poor at-home working condition
- Lack of transparency on company issues
- Uncertain in job safety

To reduce stress for your employees, Safe Work Australia suggests the following:

- Check in with your employees frequently on their physical and mental wellbeing;
- Stay well informed with information from official sources and share relevant information as it comes to hand;
- Provide employees with the appropriate channels to discuss their concerns and to find relevant workplace information, including mental wellbeing platforms;
- Advise employees of their entitlements if they are restrained from working due to anything COVID-19 related; and
- Give constant support to employees who are struggling.

Tips on maintaining a healthy lifestyle

The [Head to Health](#) government website provides some personal ways to manage the health of your mental state outside of work, that revolve around maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

These include:

- **Set a daily routine to complete.**
This will help give you structure and a sense of achievement for the day.
- **Exercise and stay active.**
This will help give your mind a distraction from work stress and give you something healthy to focus on.
- **Eat well.**
Try not to fall into the habit of snacking all day and choosing unhealthy foods that will give you no energy.
- **Interact with friends via digital platforms.**
This can help with feelings of isolation and act as another healthy distraction.
- **Stay positive.**
Remember this will pass and we are all in this together.
- **Try meditation.**
[Smiling Mind](#) and [Headspace](#) are credible platforms that offer different forms of meditation.

Mental Health Support Links

- [Headspace](#)
- [Head to health](#)
- [Beyond blue](#)

CONTINUING YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT THROUGH COVID-19 – TOP TIPS

With the onset of COVID-19, businesses have undergone intense change, whether it has been to instigate new safety measures, undertake digital transformation across the business, or deal with impacts of coronavirus to supply chains, business operation and project enquiry. We have spoken to UDIA members to learn what they're doing to continue development projects in this uncertain time.

Managing site operations

- Re-schedule work to make sure trades aren't working in the same place at the same time.
- Put clear health and safety protocols in place and ensure your team is informed and up-to-date with them on a regular basis.
- Patience is key. Focus on what you can control while you allow some extra time on the things you cannot control.

Pre-sales and marketing

- With the closure of display suites and inspections, developers have been forced to explore digitisation opportunities. It is worth exploring how to channel more enquiries through digital platforms. Anecdotally, developers have seen significantly greater levels of enquiry through social media than they were seeing in pre-COVID times.
- The opportunity to digitally transform the sales experience is perhaps the silver lining we need as we look towards recovering from COVID-19.

USEFUL LINKS

COVID-19 Updates for Industry

- [UDIA National](#) – Helping Australia Bounce Back Submission
- [UDIA NSW](#) – COVID-19 Portal NSW
- [UDIA VIC](#) – COVID-19 Hub VIC
- [UDIA WA](#) – COVID-19 Industry updates
- [UDIA QLD](#) – COVID-19 industry news
- [UDIA SA](#) – COVID-19 Action Plan SA

COVID-19 Business Support

Find out what you may be eligible for

Service NSW has created a [business support and financial assistance finder](#) which will ask you a series of questions to help you find the assistance available to you based on your circumstances.

- [Coronavirus information and support for business](#)
- [Fair Work Helpline for Employers](#)
- [Business Continuity Guidance – Australian Government](#)
- [Keeping you and your employees safe – Australian Government](#)
- [Find support being offered by financial banking institutions](#)