



Let's try again

When COVID-19 case numbers rose last December, the Government recommendation was that staff who could work from home should.

Now that case numbers are stabilising it's time for us to again start the gradual and safe process of returning to the workplace.

Below is our updated return to work roadmap and information about the return.

Key dates (subject to changes in health advice or Government directions)

Monday, 28 February to Friday, 11 March 2022	Staff currently working from home must return to the workplace at least 1 day per week.
Monday, 14 March to Friday, 25 March 2022	Staff currently working from home must work at the workplace at least 2 days per week.
From Monday, 28 March 2022	Staff currently working from home must work at the workplace at least 3 days per week. This phase marks the start of establishing longer term flexibility whilst continuing to provide the best service to our community.

You can return to the workplace sooner if you want to or have particular needs but you need to discuss this with your manager first to ensure this is done in a coordinated and managed way.



Will I need to be vaccinated?

Yes, only Council staff who are fully vaccinated (two doses) can return to the workplace. If you work in a position where a third-dose (booster) is mandated, you will also have to comply with that direction and have your third dose by the due date. If this applies to you, you will have been advised already of the deadline.

Although not yet announced, we expect the Government to extend the third-dose mandate to all local government staff in coming weeks. We encourage you to get your booster as soon as you are eligible because all available evidence suggests this is the best way of protecting you, your colleagues and loved ones.

Do I need to return to the workplace?

Yes. Now that restrictions have eased, we must all return to the workplace.

We know some people have really enjoyed working from home and have been very productive. We recognise that focused and concentrated work can be done effectively at home, but some other work is best performed in teams – problem solving, innovating, building networks, socialising.

We need to take a balanced approach. We can't lose opportunities for face-to-face connection and collaboration which helps drive positive workplace culture and innovation.

The majority of staff via our listening workshops and surveys said they favoured a balanced approach with the ability to work from home at least 2 days per week. We've listened to the feedback and settled on a flexible approach with up to 40% of your working week (see table below) able to be spent working remotely – if your role allows and with agreement from your team leader and manager.

We are also a major employer in the municipality and can't underestimate the economic impact our presence has. Businesses located in and around our activity centres rely on our custom and patronage.

One of the key reasons for locating the Civic Centre in Central Dandenong was to assist in its economic recovery. This is even more important today.

Expected workplace attendance*

Permanent days	Minimum days required in the workplace
5 days per week	3 days
4 days per week	3 days
3 days per week	2 days
2 days per week	1 day

*** for roles that can accommodate partial remote working**

From time-to-time you might need to attend the workplace over and above the minimum required in cases where :

1. Urgent matters arise where onsite presence is required
2. Operational or rostering requirements
3. The nature of your role requires in-person attendance in the workplace
4. Where working remotely places more pressure on other team members
5. To maintain department service levels and customer service

Importantly managers need to balance staffing levels over 5 days to ensure business continuity and customer service. Your manager or team leader must consult with you about this.



What about flexible working?

Since March 2020, remote working has been the main form of flexible working by necessity but not everyone can or wants to work remotely.

Flexible working takes many different forms. We are committed to embedding flexibility at work and to facilitate flexibility in your role where and when we can and according to your preferences. More information will be shared with you in coming weeks.

Can I choose which days of the week I attend the workplace?

Yes, in conjunction with your team leader, manager and colleagues. Keep in mind though that there needs to be an even coverage in the workplace each day of the week (yes, even on Mondays and Fridays!).

Can I continue to work flexible hours?

Yes, with agreement from your team leader and manager. Flexible hours of work are one of the main benefits of working remotely and increasingly offered in Council workplaces (position dependent of course as we still need to cover the business of Council and internal service delivery).

Please note for most staff, ordinary hours are performed between 7am and 7pm, dependent on the needs of the business unit and our customers. Discuss with your team leader if you are interested in flexible work arrangements and hours outside your usual work pattern. Speak to your team leader or manager if you have any questions.

How often will the Executive Management Team (EMT) be in the workplace?

Members of EMT will work to the same arrangements outlined above, working at times in the office and at times remotely. EMT will also be available to attend the workplace where required for work meetings, urgent matters or to manage critical customer or internal issues.

Am I going to be COVID safe in the workplace?

Much work is being done to ensure staff safety at all times. Council's COVID Response Team will continue to monitor the Health Minister's Orders and review safety measures to ensure everyone's safety in the workplace. Some of these measures include separating key staff via workforce bubbles and zoned use of entries, kitchens and toilets. You will be required to check in each time you enter a Council facility using the QR code.

All staff and visitors to any Council facilities must be double vaccinated and Concierges will be based at main Council facilities to check the vaccination status of visitors and to ensure check in via QR codes (while these are legally required).

Remember that you **must stay at home** if you are unwell. Also get tested if you have any cold or flu-like symptoms and continue to practice good hand hygiene. Hand sanitiser and disinfectants will be available for use.

Click the icon to read Council's current COVID Safe Plan. There may also be a local plan in place for your workplace.



Do I still have to come to the workplace if masks are compulsory?

Yes if masks are required indoors at workplaces, Health Orders must be followed at all times and we will still have to come to the workplace. Sometimes Orders requiring us to wear masks indoors are made at short notice.

Wearing a mask is inconvenient but unfortunately it's a reality of COVID times.



When do I have to return Council equipment I took home with me?

You might have taken equipment home with you to allow you to work remotely. Things like chairs, telephone headsets, keyboards, monitors, etc. You will need to return this equipment to your workplace when we return to the office in full from 28 March 2022.

If I have to return my Council-owned equipment I won't be able to work remotely. What can I do?

If you need equipment to support remote working, you will need to purchase this. Such purchases might be tax deductible.

To further support flexibility, our PC Purchase Scheme Policy has been updated and now includes purchase of office equipment like ergonomic chairs and desks. If you are worried about the working conditions at your home, and you do not wish to purchase (tax deductible) items to create a safe and suitable working environment at home, you will need to return to the workplace for 100% of your working hours.

Watch this short video which shows how to set up a safe working environment at home.



Can I hold a hybrid meeting with people in the office and with people working remotely at the same time?

Yes. Council's IT department has invested heavily in video conferencing technology including the purchase of Surface Hubs. Surface Hubs allow hybrid meetings to be run with online and in-person attendance at the same time. Most workplaces now have at least one Surface Hub installed. IT have produced guidance material to help you run hybrid meetings.



Online hybrid meeting etiquette

Hybrid meetings can be challenging in an open workplaces. General conversation and voices can make it hard to hear when on a call. Please remain considerate of others who might be on the phone or conducting or participating in meetings. If you can, try to hold or participate in meetings in a meeting room with a Surface Hub or other quiet space away from the general office.

Remember too, many people have been working remotely for a long time without the constant noise, interruptions and chatter associated with an open office. For many people, this has been one of the best aspects of working remotely and the thought of returning to a noisy office environment is daunting.

As a team, the transition to a new way of working might be the perfect time to develop some 'office etiquette' guidelines. Click the icon for tips for better online meetings.



Oops! I forgot to bring my laptop with me to work. What do I do?

Unfortunately, IT can't assist because they don't keep a stock of spare laptops (or other equipment like headsets) for people who may forget theirs. If you forget your laptop, you may be able to work for the day at a desk that has a desktop PC. Remember though that you must use the supplied disinfectant to wipe all surfaces before and after use.

I've lost/misplaced Council equipment. What do I do?

Any lost or misplaced items can be ordered through IT, but it will be at your business unit's expense. In some cases, people may be personally responsible for replacement costs of equipment due to negligence.



When I return to the workplace, I want to again park in the Thomas Street car park. What's happening to the cost of permits?

Charges were suspended during April 2021 for staff who held permits to park in the Thomas Street Multi-deck car park.

During this return to work transition phase, these arrangements will continue. Charges will be reinstated from 28 March 2022.

I have some concerns / questions about my individual situation. Who can I talk to?

It's understandable to have some concerns about what's next.

Consultation, discussion and understanding are essential to find the best work arrangements for your team, our customers and you. In the first instance, you should raise questions or concerns with your supervisor or manager.

OD team members, Health and Safety Representatives or union delegates could also be a support.

As always, free and confidential support and advice is available through our Employee Assistance provider Converge International. Call 1300 327 687 for a confidential appointment.

