

DWF Risk engaged to facilitate WHS risk assessment to inform COVID-19 response plans at a large State government regional health service



Background

DWF Risk was recently engaged to assist a health sector client in understanding and managing Work Health and Safety risks related to COVID-19. The risk assessment was integral in the development of the client's COVID-19 response plans.

The situation

DWF took the approach of forming an 'advisory panel' (a multi-disciplinary team of subject matter experts) to provide advice on WHS, Employment Relations, WHS Legal, and occupational medical issues arising from COVID-19 response activities. The client's service area spans some 90,000 square kilometres, covering 29 hospitals and facilities. It includes aged care and indigenous health clinics in remote locations. The health service is one of the largest employers in the region, employing over 5,000 people.



How we helped

DWF Risk was engaged to facilitate and develop a risk assessment to identify and assess WHS risks associated with the COVID-19 response. As the Health Service has a workforce who are well and truly at the front line, it was critical to understand any hazards and risks additional to "business as usual" operations across all the health and support facilities. While there was a massive amount of work being done to prepare for the anticipated influx of infected patients, the risk assessment effectively collated the information, analysed and assessed the risks and the required control measures, and identified any further actions required.

DWF Risk conducted interviews with over a dozen key staff and looked at issues including:

- staff welfare;
- identifying and managing vulnerable staff;
- protocols for clearance of staff to return to work after infection (or suspected infection);
- hazardous manual tasks;
- induction and onboarding of new or redeployed staff;
- fatigue;
- contractor management;
- cleaning and laundry capability;
- PPE provisions;
- training; and
- hazardous chemicals management for manufacturing of its own hand sanitiser gel utilising ethanol sourced from a local gin distillery.

The risk assessment is a key document in the legislated WHS consultation and communication requirements, and gives the workforce visibility of what the Health Service is doing to ensure their health and safety. It also provides the opportunity to raise concerns, provide feedback and get involved in the process, which is a key component of effective WHS management.

This work is a great example of the breadth of service delivery DWF can offer clients, drawing on Connected Services to provide expert input to a single solution for the client.

It is now a legal requirement in most Australian states to have some form of COVID Safe Plan in place. If your business needs assistance in achieving and maintaining compliance with Australia's COVID Safe principles and legal requirements, please contact us below.

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