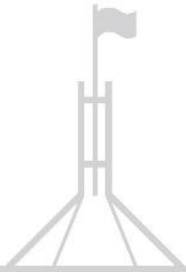




Australian Government



Infection Control Policy for *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* employees

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Department of Finance (Finance) is committed to contributing to a safe and healthy working environment for staff employed under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) and supporting Parliamentarians, managers and MOP(S) Act employees to reduce and control the risks of infection spreading in the workplace.

1.2 MOP(S) Act employees often work in enclosed offices and interact with people in close proximity. This environment increases the risk of infection. Most infections are highly preventable. Everyone in the office has to play a part in applying infection control measures.

1.3 This policy has been developed to provide guidance to Parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees on how to:

- effectively manage and control infections and communicable diseases in the workplace
- minimise the adverse health effects of infectious diseases on everyone in the workplace and business
- reduce the risk to members of the workforce of acquiring preventable infections,
- effectively manage infections if they occur
- prevent and contain antimicrobial resistance

2. Principles

2.1 This policy is based on the principles that:

- everyone has the right to a healthy and safe working environment
- workplaces must prepare for the possibility of sudden cases of infection in their community and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively, and efficiently, consistent with advice from federal, state, and local health authorities
- the basis of good infection control in the workplace is to assume that everyone is potentially infectious. Proper procedures have to be followed at all times.

3. What is an infectious disease?

3.1 An infection is the invasion and growth of pathogens in the body. It can begin anywhere in the body, and may take some time before the invading pathogen multiply enough to trigger symptoms of illness. This means that an infected person may unwittingly spread a disease during the incubation period¹.

3.2 Infectious diseases (e.g., H1N1, COVID-19) can be transmitted from person-to-person, animal-to-person (zoonotic), through the environment, or by contaminated food and water. Most infectious diseases are spread by a single, well-defined route, and understanding how they spread will help determine the best prevention methods.

3.3 An epidemic refers to an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above that is normally expected in that population in that area. A pandemic is an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.

3.4 Infections spread in a number of ways:

- airborne – a person inhales airborne pathogens. Usually these airborne pathogens originate from an infect person coughing or sneezing.

¹ An incubation period refers to the number of days between when an infection occurs and when symptoms appear.

- touching – a person touches contaminated surfaces or objects. This can include a person ingesting contaminated food.
- skin to skin – a person may touch an infected person, for example shaking hands.
- bodily fluids – a person may come into contact with pathogens from an infected person's saliva, urine, blood or faeces. These pathogenic can enter the person through cuts/abrasions or through the mucus membranes of the mouth and nose.

4. Managing infection in the workplace

4.1 Everyone in the workplace has a responsibility to ensure, as far as is practicable, that the risk and spread of infectious disease does not create a risk to health and safety at work.

4.2 The risk of infectious disease in the workplace can be minimised by Parliamentarians, managers and MOP(S) Act employees implementing a risk management process by:

- keeping informed and up-to-date on health advisories
- complying with any restrictions and directives issued by federal, state, and local authorities
- undertaking WHS risk management by managing direct and indirect risks
- incorporating WHS preparations and risk control measures into a business-continuity plan

4.3 The best way to avoid infections is to practice good hygiene which includes:

- frequent hand washing
- practicing physical distancing by keeping a 1.5m distance from other people
- frequent cleaning of shared workspaces and telephones
- ensuring MOP(S) Act employees who are unwell do not attend the workplace
- ensuring hand sanitiser, tissues and disinfectant wipes are available for all MOP(S) Act employees and visitors. These are available to order on the Complete Office Supplies (COS) catalogue and can be used in conjunction with frequent hand washing
- wearing face masks to reduce potential of transmission to others
- frequent and proper disinfecting of high-touch points such as lift buttons and doorknobs

4.5 The risk management process aims to identify all reasonably foreseeable factors which could contribute to an increase risk of infectious diseases spreading in the workplace and minimise them.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Parliamentarians, managers and MOP(S) Act employees are responsible for ensuring that their behaviours or actions do not exacerbate the risks of infectious diseases spreading in the workplace.

MOP(S) Act Employees are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care to manage their own health and safety
- complying so far as reasonably able to with any reasonable instruction that is given to them by their employing Parliamentarian and manager
- understanding their responsibilities to ensure they do not attend the workplace if they are unwell
- familiarise themselves with the Infection Control Policy
- participate in consultation and contribute to identifying risk management strategies
- informing their employing Parliamentarian or manager of a medical condition which may result in the risk of and infectious disease in the workplace.

Parliamentarians and managers are responsible for:

- exercising due diligence to comply with WHS duties
- providing and maintaining a safe workplace for all employees
- ensuring compliance with local health authority directives where applicable
- communicating with and providing appropriate education and resources to staff regarding infection control measures
- nominating staff for WHS roles vital to effectively manage infection control in the office (e.g., WHS Site Officer, First Aid Officer)

Finance is responsible for:

- supporting Parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees by providing WHS advice in relation to infection control in the workplace
- supporting employees who are experiencing an infection or communicable disease through the provision of advice, early intervention, and workers' compensation frameworks where applicable
- developing and is accountable for infection control policies, procedures, and initiatives
- consulting with MOP(S) employees via the WHS Committee on infection control policies, procedures, and initiatives
- liaising with, and following the directives of state and territory health authorities where required
- managing training for WHS roles, including reimbursement of training where costs are associated
- delivering programs (e.g., annual flu vaccination program) to reduce the risk of communicable diseases in the workplace
- measuring and monitoring infection control targets to improve policies and procedures

6. Reporting

6.1 Where a workplace or workers are affected by an infection or infectious disease they should contact the MaPS HR Advice and Support team on (02) 6215 3333 or MOPSSupport@finance.gov.au for advice.

7. Related legislation and Guidelines

12.1 This policy is to be delivered in accordance with:

- [Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2020 - 2023](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011](#)
- [Fair Work Act 2009](#)

8. Resources

- [Royal Australian College of General Practitioners \(2016\) Infection prevention and control standards: For general practices and other office-based and community-based practices \(5th Edition\)](#)
- [Department of Health \(2010\) Infection Control](#)

9. Further Assistance

For queries relating to the operation of this policy please contact MOPSWHS@finance.gov.au