

PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL

Guidelines No. 7.7.1: Computer use guidelines

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Context

1 The Office of Parliamentary Counsel achieves its objectives primarily through the application of the knowledge and expertise of workers, who produce printed and electronic documents, and deliver training programs.

2 Workers use information and communication technology on a daily basis, in the office at 28 Sydney Ave, Forrest or from home. Most work is sedentary, undertaken at workstations and using repetitive movements. There is a high level of autonomy over the way work is undertaken, and for natural breaks in work.

Risks

3 The long term use of computers and other information and communication technology poses risks to the health and safety of workers. Inappropriate computer use can cause muscle and joint pain, overuse injuries of the shoulder, arm, wrist or hand, and eyestrain. Using a computer for long periods can increase the chance of developing an injury.

Your obligations

4 While at work, you must take reasonable care for your own health and safety; take reasonable care that your acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others; comply, so far as you are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that you are given in relation to protecting health and safety at work; and co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to you.

5 You can fulfil your obligations by:

- (a) Maintaining your awareness of this safe system of work and following its instructions;
- (b) Ensuring that your equipment is set up appropriately;
- (c) Working safely, with regular breaks;
- (d) Managing your workload and using efficient work processes;
- (e) Inform yourself of how to prevent injury;
- (f) Reporting discomfort, pain or injury promptly;
- (g) Suggesting ways to make your work safer.

Ensure your equipment is set up appropriately

6 OPC provides suitable furniture, fittings, equipment and software to enable you to work safely. You will receive a workstation assessment when you join OPC, and as needed if you are experiencing discomfort. Please ensure that you learn how to use your equipment properly, and are able to adjust your workstation to match the recommendations of your personal assessment. Please take some time to learn how to use Workpace and set up the rhythm of breaks to suit you.

Work safely with regular breaks

7 Please move frequently, and rest your arms and shoulders for short periods frequently. Please take regular short breaks, and walk around, or stand up and stretch.

8 Please remain aware of your posture while sitting and standing and adjust it where possible, for example, alternate between sitting and standing. The best posture is the next one - make minor adjustments a lot to take the strain off your muscles.

9 Please alternate your tasks where possible so that you're not performing a specific activity for long, uninterrupted periods.

10 Please keep in mind that your computer is a dangerous piece of equipment *if it is not used properly*, which can and does cause injury to people just like you.

Manage your workload and use efficient work processes

11 Please monitor your workload and the number of hours each day that you are working, and talk with your supervisor about overload before it has an adverse impact on

you. Consider your well-being before agreeing to overtime (for APS4-APS6 workers). If you would like some assistance in approaching a conversation with your supervisor about your workload or work processes, please consider using the free, confidential Employee Assistance Program

12 There are times when external deadlines require working long stressful hours, and this is impossible to avoid. At other times, deadlines are known in advance and can be planned for. To the extent possible, please manage your time so that long, stressful hours leading up to a deadline are avoided or minimised.

13 Deadlines and time pressures can tempt workers to skip breaks, and stress can make tightened muscles more vulnerable to fatigue. Please be alert to this when you are working fast and under pressure, and resist the temptation to skip your breaks. They are even more important at this time.

14 If you have an injury or a disability, please use the reasonable adjustments that are available to you.

Inform yourself of how to prevent injury

15 Please pay attention to the regular communication messages about working safely with computers, and undertake the mandatory online WHS training when requested. Note that when your level of personal fitness and well-being is higher, you are less likely to be injured.

Report discomfort, pain or injury promptly

16 If you experience discomfort, pain or injury, please talk to your supervisor about it as soon as possible. Please complete a WHS Hazard and Incident report, and take advantage of any early intervention support you are offered.

Suggest ways to make your work safer

17 You will be consulted regularly through the Workplace Consultative Committee. Please use this forum, or talk with colleagues and your supervisor, about ideas to make your work safer.

Our obligations to you

18 The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* requires that OPC provides you with a safe workplace.

19 We fulfil our obligations to you by:

- (a) Identifying computer use risks and treatments in the WHS Risk Register and Treatment Plan;
- (b) Providing suitable furniture, fittings, equipment and software;
- (c) Managing workloads and work processes;
- (d) Providing education and training;

- (e) Providing well-being initiatives and personal support;
- (f) Monitoring and reporting hazards;
- (g) Consulting with workers.

WHS Risk Register and Treatment Plan

20 Consistent with OPC 7.16 WHS Risk Management, OPC maintains and regularly reviews a WHS risk register and treatment plan¹. The risk associated with the use of computers is identified in that register, as well as risk mitigation treatments to prevent injury or illness.

Provision of suitable furniture, fittings, equipment and software

21 OPC provides ergonomic furniture and fittings at the office, including two styles of physiotherapist approved adjustable chairs, height adjustable desks and multiple, adjustable monitors. Ergonomic computer aids and peripherals such as ergonomic keyboards and mice; headphones and document holders are also provided.

22 Tailored equipment is available to all staff if recommended by a medical professional after a workstation assessment, provided by OPC to all new staff, including as reasonable adjustments for people with disability. These assessments are available to staff working in the office and at home.

23 WHS risks are considered in software design, and keyboard shortcuts are available for most computer systems.

24 'Workpace' break software is included in the standard operating environment for all staff.

25 Staff are encouraged to have regular eye tests, and these and the purchase of spectacles to assist with reading computer screens are the subject of a generous reimbursement².

Workload and work process management

26 Acknowledging that deadlines and time pressures can tempt workers to skip breaks, and that stress can make muscles more vulnerable to fatigue, supervisors monitor workloads and adjust them as necessary to avoid adverse impact on individuals. Overtime policy and guidance includes the requirement for managers to approve overtime.

27 Supervisors check in regularly with team members, particularly if they are working from home.

¹ [\[S20TP183.V04.DOCX Work Health Safety Risk Register and Treatment Plan\]](#)

² [\[s07pg478.v23.docx Office Procedural Circular No. 7.4 Allowances\]](#)

28 Reasonable adjustments to work processes and deadlines are available for people with disability.

29 The Employee Assistance Program is available for staff to discuss work-related issues, including raising concerns with workload and work processes.

Education and training

30 Workstation assessments are provided for new employees and as required. These include both confirmation of appropriate workstation set up as well as education in the safe use of computer and associated equipment.

31 These are supported by ongoing education and awareness of safe ways to work, including correct work station set ups, regular breaks and keyboard shortcuts. This includes a checklist that staff who are working from home must complete, and information available on the intranet on working safely from home.

32 Regular mandatory online WHS training is provided.

Well-being initiatives and personal support

33 A range of healthy lifestyle initiatives are supported by OPC to encourage personal fitness and well-being, which can minimise the risk of computer related injury.

34 Early intervention support from People Services team is available to minimise injury and encourage early recovery.

Hazard monitoring and reporting

35 Regular workplace hazards inspections are carried out and include the review of ergonomic furniture. Regular and ad hoc maintenance is carried out.

36 Hazards, near misses and injuries must be reported to supervisors and People Services team for appropriate action. Trend data is analysed and reported to SMT and the WCC quarterly.

Consulting with workers

37 Workplace consultation with the Health and Safety Representative and WCC occurs where decisions are being made that have an impact on working safely with computers.

For further information

38 For further information please see the links below or email [#Personnel](#)

- (a) [Work Health and Safety](#) intranet page
- (b) [Comcare - Computers and Workstations](#)
- (c) [WHS Risk Register and Treatment Plan](#)
- (d) [Instructions to get to WorkPace training](#)

Related documents

39 The following document is related to this policy:

- (a) Policy No. 7.7 - Work Health and Safety Framework

Review

40 This document will be reviewed at least every three years.

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Document History		
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