AUSTRALIAN RADIO: COVID-19 SAFE STUDIO PRINCIPLES

Prepared by AFTRS 1st July 2020

This document is current for July 2020

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This document is current for July 2020

These guidelines have been devised by a sector-wide Australian Radio Industry task force to support industry to produce live and pre-recorded content safely while COVID 19 restrictions and containment measures are in place.

These Safe Studio Principles offer up-to-date, practicable advice, drawing on a range of resources and consultation with the federal Chief Medical Officer team. It is still the responsibility of each station to ensure they are taking reasonable and practical steps to safeguard their talent and production teams.

It is important to note that these guidelines will continue to evolve as Government measures change and the sector develops its own best practices as its returns to production.

RADIO AND PODCAST INDUSTRY SECTOR CONSULTATION GROUP:

The Chief Medical Officers Department Australian Department of Health, Commercial Radio Australia, The Australian Film Radio and Television School, The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, First Nations Media Australia, SBS, TAFE NSW, Community Media Training Organisation and Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.

1. RATIONALE

COVID-19 has presented an unprecedented challenge to all industries and all workplaces - and people need help and support to navigate this new world and return to work, safely. In Australia, state, territory, and Federal governments have imposed a series of physical distancing and travel restrictions with wide-ranging impacts on programs, employment and volunteers in the radio industry.

With infection rates easing and physical distancing and quarantine measures still in place, these Safe Studio Principles are designed to assist the sector maintain a healthy and safe workplace through the COVID-19 Pandemic.

2. COVID-19 RiskMitigation

All stations will need to undertake systematic risk assessment with consideration of both the hazard posed by COVID-19 and also operation in an environment which will be subject to greater uncertainty and possible contractions and expansions related to the adjustments required to manage community transmission.

It is recommended that each station prepares a COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Plan. Radio and Podcasting in Australia encompasses a range of activities - of very different scale, scope and nature, across states, locations and regions. As a significant workplace hazard, COVID-19 necessitates that each station undertakes a risk assessment of their production processes and operations and develop a *Covid Risk Mitigation plan* that addresses all risks related to that specific production to minimise the risk of transmission of infection in the workplace and ensure, as far as is reasonable and practicable, the safety of its workers.

Additionally, First Nation's Media has created a specific Our Community resource Pandemic Policy Template which can be found here.

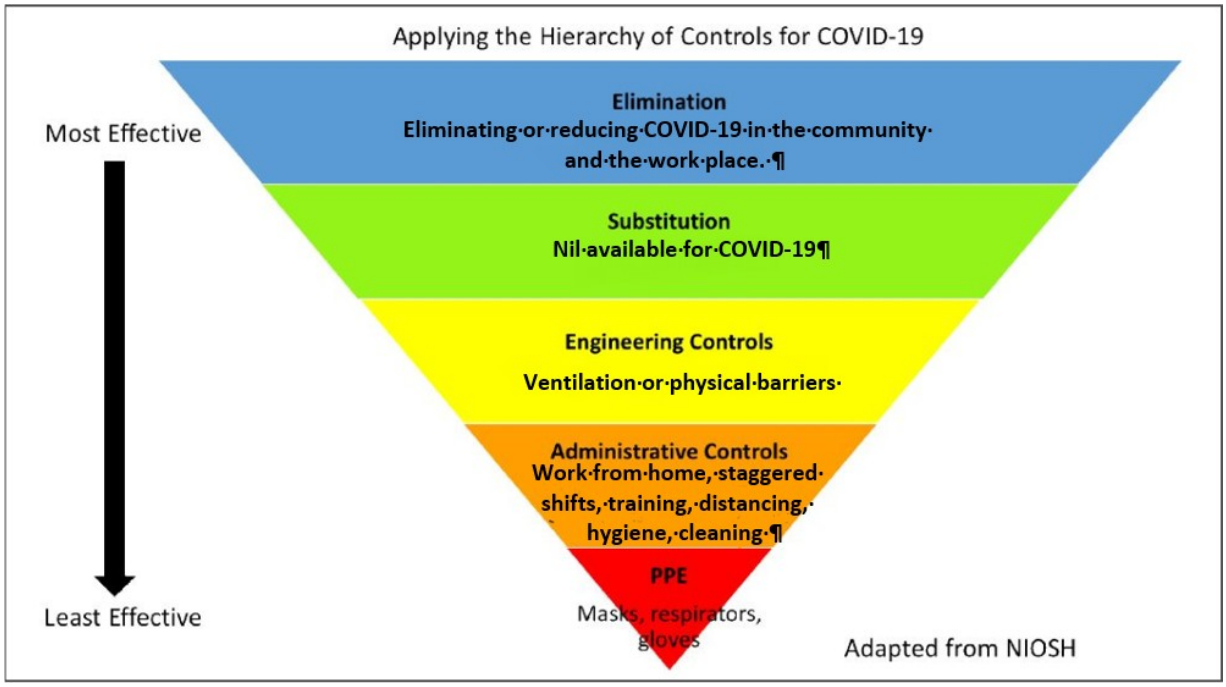
These guidelines will assist with this plan however risk assessment should be undertaken in accordance with How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks, Code of Practice, December 2011. [link]

Some important actions for industry to consider include:

- Identification of reliable sources of information on COVID-19 and staying up to date. First Nations media have a dedicated website to point to reliable and up to date information.
- Creation of a business continuity plan for the COVID-19 environment: model cash flows and debt levels, identify critical operations and employees.

- Create pragmatic, trigger-based contingency plans. Consider any requirement for additional financial support.
- Consideration of how their industry is affected by COVID-19. This may include market changes, supply chain impacts, fluctuating costs and impacts on service capabilities.
- Consideration of a staged return to full function, this may require re-focus and re-skilling.
- Reconsideration of safety and protection of employees through workplace and work process mitigations and support impacted employees.

Industries need to manage risk intensively using the hierarchy of controls.



The most effective means to prevent exposures to COVID-19 is through 'elimination'– physically removing the hazard (COVID-19).

This could be through appropriate treatment or vaccination. At this time in Australia, this is being achieved through distancing measures and aggressive case detection and early isolation. For businesses and industry this means ensuring people do not attend when unwell or if they have been exposed to others who are unwell. It may mean a change to the business model to reduce interactions such as a change to virtual businesses or an enhancement of online activities.

Engineering controls involve distancing the worker from the hazard, examples may be barriers in workplaces (such as those seen in supermarkets) or changes to ventilation or filtration. Well-designed engineering controls can be highly effective in protecting workers and consumers and are not dependent on employee behaviour.

The fourth level is 'administrative controls'– this involves a change in the way work is performed. This will be aimed at preventing transmission and each business or industry will need to consider measures appropriate for their environment. Measures may include: work from home policies; work flexibility; staggered shifts; grouping workers; changed work space structure, function and process to accommodate distancing, and; education and support for hygiene and enhanced cleaning.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – this is protecting workers with masks, gloves, and other equipment. PPE relies on adequate supplies and proper and continuous use; this is difficult to achieve so higher-level measures are used in preference.

As restrictions ease our industry will need to be flexible and responsive. Each sector is different, and each will need to undertake a systematic risk assessment and apply controls that are relevant to their circumstances. Risk management should apply the hierarchy of controls to provide a 'defence in depth' approach. This is important to promote economic recovery, ensure public health and control of community transmission of COVID-19.

3. ABOUT COVID-19

a. How does COVID-19 spread from human to human?

The virus is most likely to spread from person to person:

- through direct contact with a person while they are infectious
- through contact with droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- through touching objects or surfaces, such as door handles or tables, where an infected person has coughed or sneezed and contaminated the surface with droplets and then touching your face or mouth

b. How to avoid catching COVID-19?

- The best way to avoid infection is to avoid contact with someone with COVID-19, practise 'physical distancing' and not to travel overseas at this time.
- As with other communicable diseases, people with symptoms should stay at home, except to get medical care, and should avoid using public transport.

c. Everyone should practise good hand and cough hygiene:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser (e.g. before and after eating, and after going to the toilet)
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of it straight away; wash your hands afterwards
- Cough or sneeze into your (flexed) elbow
- Cough away from other people.
- Stay more than 1.5 metres away from people
- Avoid touching your face and mouth while out in public
- Do not touch, kiss, or hug people outside your immediate family

4. GENERAL CONTROLS TO CONSIDER

a. PREVENTING UNWELL PEOPLE COMING TO WORK

i. COMMUNICATION

- Identify reliable sources of information, stay up to date and ensure your staff has access to these sources of information
- It is important that everyone understands the symptoms of COVID and how it is spread so distribute guidelines, posters, infographics in all areas throughout the office/station/studios
- Support people to work from home
- Anyone who is sick must stay at home, however mild the symptoms
- Briefings to be conducted before commencement of work, and regular updates conducted, both general and departmental.

ii. IF A STAFF OR VOLUNTEER MEMBER BECOMES UNWELL AT WORK

- In the case of a staff member becoming ill at work, their supervisor or HOD will require them to wear a mask and not touch anyone to protect others from infection
- People who become unwell at work will be required to wait in an isolated room until arrangements can be made for them to travel to their home.
- The supervisor/HOD/first aider will then be required to advise the General or the Station Manager that they have sent the unwell person home.
- Once the room has been vacated, it will be locked off until thoroughly cleaned.
- The staff member needs a medical certificate declaring them fit to return to work
- The management/HR team to maintain contact with staff who are absent due to illness.
- If the person develops symptoms (fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness, or shortness of breath) within 14 days of last contact with a confirmed case, they should arrange to see their doctor for urgent assessment.
- They should telephone the health clinic or hospital before they arrive and tell them their travel history or that they may have been in contact with a potential case of coronavirus.
- They must remain isolated either in their home or a healthcare setting until public health authorities inform them it is safe for you to return to their usual activities.
- All staff be notified in the case of any outbreak (see Appendix for what to do in the event of a confirmed case of Covid-19)

b. PREVENTING TRANSMISSION:

- All workers encouraged to follow personal health practices for reducing the risk of transmission – at work and at home – and take all steps to prevent transmission.
- Encourage all workers to download the COVID-19 Safe app issued by the Australian government Department of Health
- Review and optimise ventilation – open doors, leave/wedge doors open where possible and review filtrations systems in air conditioning
- Meetings should be remote where possible
- All personal equipment – where possible - should be used exclusively by the same person.
- Some stations have implemented protocols that workers have their temperature taken or be tested at the beginning of every day. This may assist with identifying people who are unwell but is not a reliable measure of infection as a percentage of cases do not have a temperature or could be asymptomatic – obtain staff written consent first.

i. HYGIENE:

- Educate and provide training around appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene practices
- Signage to be posted around offices and studios to remind staff about hygiene and physical distancing required
- Provide handwashing stations, hand sanitisers throughout the studios and offices, and personal hand sanitisers where required
- Require frequent handwashing by all staff
- Provide Isopropyl wipes for equipment
- Increase frequency of cleaning of all facilities and equipment- especially high-touch areas, kitchens, and bathrooms
- Include additional specialised staff responsible to monitor hand sanitising and to conduct cleaning
- Eliminate handshakes, hugs, and kisses to greet or say hello – be respectful of other's personal space
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing or use own elbow
- Avoid communication practices that lead to air-born particles or droplets: talking directly into people's faces; laughing, shouting, directly or near people's faces.
- Utilise Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as appropriate and as directed.

ii. PHYSICAL DISTANCING:

- Ensure physical distancing in all areas (currently 1.5 metres between persons and 1 person per 4 square metres as of June 2020)
- Limit number of people in all areas to essential personnel only
- Restrict studio access to approved personnel only
- Reduce unnecessary contact with members of the public and suppliers/couriers
- All meetings to be held remotely or outside with appropriate physical distancing

iii. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- It is not government guidance to wear protective masks or other PPE in the workplace other than in healthcare settings. Stations may wish to consider masks or other PPE for specific purposes. For example, where it is not possible to maintain physical distancing or where handled equipment cannot be sanitised.
- If masks are to be worn, they should ideally be of the FFP2/3 type which afford some protection against inhaled infection (particularly if properly fitted and tested). However, these are in short supply and rightly prioritised for health workers. See link below for guidance on the use of masks:

  https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-use-of-masks-by-the-public-in-the-community

- The use of gloves when not indicated represents a waste of resources and does not contribute to a reduction of cross-transmission. It may also result in missed opportunities for hand hygiene. Gloves do not provide complete protection against hand contamination. Thorough hand washing after interacting with surfaces is the best method for reducing risk of transmission

5 RADIO & PODCAST SAFE STUDIO PRINCIPLES

These principles are to assist with preparation of a Risk Mitigation Plan for the specific requirements of each station.

- Individuals to report any change of health status or symptom to department heads before arrival
- All staff provided with personal supplies of hand sanitiser
- Personal equipment and tools such as phones, pens and papers should not be shared
- All equipment to be strictly only handled by staff from relevant department responsible for that equipment
- Staff to travel to work by private transport where possible
- Identify all staff considered to be 'high risk' and ensure you have appropriate risk assessments and mitigations in place, and they have the information and support they need to follow expert health advice.
- Observe physical distancing at all times and set capacity restrictions for studios.

a. SHOW/PODCAST DEVELOPMENT AND PRE-PRODUCTION

- Development should be done with remote working systems
- Personnel to sanitise their workstations at the end of each day

b. WORKING IN STUDIOS

- Studio spaces to be marked into safe sections, i.e. floor markings, with production teams isolated from each other where practical
- PDs, CDs and EPs to include COVID-19 mitigation practices in all daily briefing and inductions
- Spray mic socks with antibacterial spray and wipe down headphones with antibacterial wipes before and after each use. Consider each staff member using their own headphones and personal microphone popper stopper / mic sock where possible.
- In addition to organisation's cleaning supplies, Announcers and Producers to clean studio surfaces, own mic socks, wipe down radio panel, door handles/lights etc. before and after each use.
- Consider providing a Check list of what staff CAN clean for themselves:
    - Can sanitize with approved branded IsoWipes and clean power switches, chairs (including back adjustments), cables, mic stands, keyboards, mouse, mouse pad, lighting switch, door handles, desk surfaces, including the underside of the desk near where people sit.
    - Wiping all technical hard surfaces (panels, mic stands, keyboards etc.) with isopropyl wipes
    - Removing/replacing pop filters between uses. Washing them thoroughly with dishwashing liquid and allowing to air dry.
    - Spraying soft surfaces (e.g. chair seats and backs) with Glen 20 or similar

- Checklist of what Users are NOT to clean - e.g. using sprays like Glen 20 on the panel, these are to be cleaned and sanitized by the Technical/Specialist cleaners only
- Ensure touchscreens are regularly cleaned, avoid or clean after use where possible
- Show Prep sheets, updates, general documents and signing of forms to be digital, in order to minimise hand-to-hand contact and sharing paper
- Avoid face-to-face interviews. Ensure station has an approval process for exceptions i.e. Station Manager/GM/CD/PD. Maintain safe social distancing at all times. Before conducting a face-to-face interview, ask interviewees if they have any reason to believe they have COVID-19 or have been exposed to the virus (i.e. been overseas in the last 14 days or had direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID_19 or if they have any flu-like symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath)
- Virtual meetings are recommended. Face-to-face interview alternatives include phone, zoom, skype or RINGR
- Studios and workplaces should be limited to essential personnel only. Visitors not permitted, no 'dropping in'.
- Limit unnecessary and casual contact between personnel
- Monitor gatherings and congregating between breaks, providing spaces for those on standby to be safe.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY MEASURES FOR STUDIOS

- Personal equipment and tools to not be shared, such as mobile phones, pens, paperwork, laptops, drink bottles, swipe cards.
- All shared items in studios and rooms including spare mic stands, headphones, pens, whiteboard markers, cups and any non-essential items removed. Consider removing microphones and stands from studios that do not meet the 1.5 metre rule.
- Limiting access to communal cutlery or crockery onsite. Encourage staff and volunteers to bring their own.
- Enforce importance of all measures, to ensure staff are doing their best to social distance
- Printers and shared computers to have access to cleaning products and hand sanitiser
- Cleaning to be undertaken throughout the day, especially in common areas
- Management of doors and entrances may require non-touch entry and exit, and practices such as wedging open when possible (noting fire doors and exclusions)
- Deep cleaning at the end of each day including the studios, production and offices, kitchen, and food service areas.

c. FOOD AND BEVERAGE

- No meals to be prepared by staff in office kitchen
- All meals including catering should be pre-prepared and individually packaged,
- Snacks should remain in original manufacturer's packaging and should be in individual portions

- Regular sanitisation of beverage stations and tables and chairs
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available at the entrance of the room/area where people eat
- All drinks to be in single serving containers
- Increase signage at water refill stations to ensure safe refilling

d. SOUND EQUIPMENT

- Portable equipment colour coded with tape/stickers to identify it has been used and requires cleaning before next use
- Lapel mics should be avoided, however if unavoidable, personnel should apply their own lapel mics
- No one outside the audio production should handle sound equipment - with the exception of staff applying their own lapel mics
- Each individual in audio production should be equipped with their own supply of alcohol-based cleaner and bottles of sanitiser

6. FIRST NATIONS GUIDELINES

a. Broadcasting in remote communities, and on location in remote areas:

People who live in remote communities are a top priority, and we all need to work together to keep people safe and stop the spread of the virus. Travel into remote communities is currently restricted. Media workers can seek exemptions to move in and out of biosecurity areas as essential workers where necessary but should still maintain hygiene and physical distancing practices when carrying out their work and limit interactions in the community. This is particularly relevant to technicians who may need to travel to biosecurity areas to undertake repairs and/or maintain broadcast services. State and territory governments, in consultation with Indigenous communities and in line with the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, have nominated areas where this will apply.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency website has information about travel restrictions into remote communities, including maps of the restricted areas.

b. Consultation and Collaboration:

- Consultation and collaboration is to be done remotely.
- While there are travel restrictions in place for remote communities, virtual collaboration and consultation where possible is advised.

Further information and resources available through First Nation's Media:
https://firstnationsmedia.org.au/resources

7. MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

This document is current for July 2020

COVID-19 Mental Health Resources and Information Sheets can also be found here:

Australian Indigenous Health Net Info

Australian Psychological Society

Beyond Blue

Black Dog Institute

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

Headspace

Lifeline Australia

National LGBTI Health Alliance

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

Relationships Australia

SANE Australia

Support Act - Support Act is offering free counseling services to community and First Nations media workers through their Wellbeing Hotline.

8. APPENDICES

a. COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE
Safe Work Australia – Undertaking Risk Assessment
Safe Work Australia – Workplace checklist

b. USE OF MASKS
Note there is guidance here on the use of masks

c. WHEN TO WASH YOUR HANDS
- After going to the toilet
- After blowing your nose
- After smoking
- After handling/patting animals
- Before, during and after preparing food
- When your hands are visibly dirty

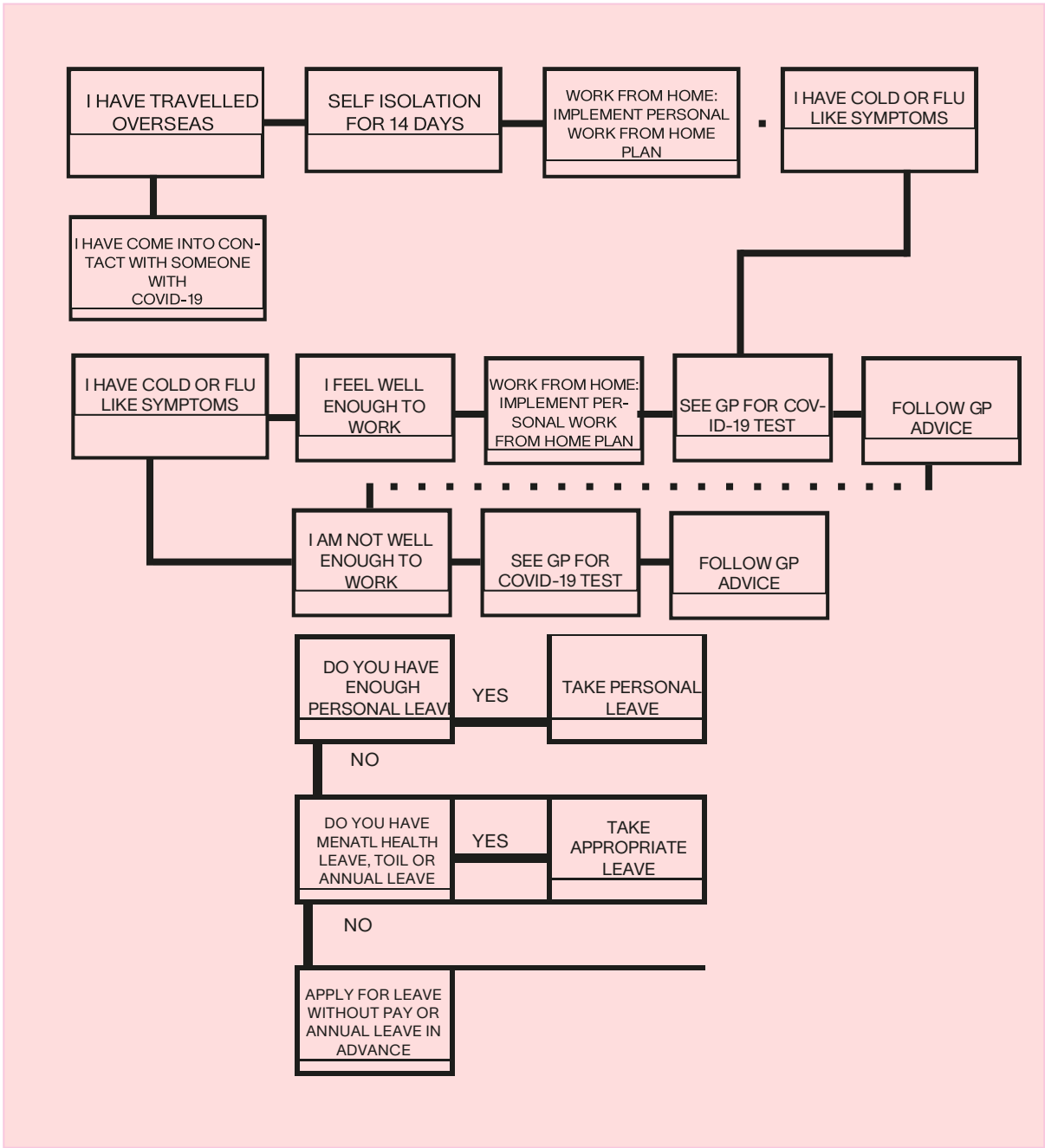
d. WORKPLACE POSTERS
List of Posters for workplace can be found here:
Ask for help if you're unwell
Hand Washing
Keep our mob safe, wash your hands
Hand Rubbing
Simple steps to stop the Spread.
Keeping your distance
Keep our mob safe with extra space

OTHER WORKPLACE RESOURCES (VIDEO, RADIO & POSTERS)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Australian Government Campaign Resources (including video, radio and poster resources)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Australian Government resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities (including video, radio and poster resources)

e. WHAT IF: WHAT IF SOMEONE DOES BECOME ILL OR TESTS POSITIVE?



f. Information and alerts – federal and state Health Departments:

Visit the Department of Health's website for the latest alerts on COVID-19 in Australia, or the World Health Organization's website for global updates. State Health Department links to go here.
Department of Health – Covid Information
Department of Health – Cleaning and Disinfection
Department of Health – Information for Employers