

# ***Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy***



Access4u is committed to ensuring the safety of all persons who are required to work in situations where they need to manage the risks associated with working alone, remotely and or in isolated settings. This Policy provides direction for a risk management approach to the identification of hazards and risks associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings. Access4u is committed to ensuring the safety of all persons working alone, including in remote or isolated working environments, such as:

- Working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings on Access4u' sites, including after hours;
- Working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings off-site, including a consumer's home or client facility sites such as hospitals and Aged Care facilities; and
- Working from a vehicle, including road travel.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to Access4u managers and workers for the management of work to reduce the likelihood of injury or illness arising from hazards associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings.

This procedure applies to any standard hours of work including after hours and / or shift work that meet the criteria to be classed as working alone or in isolation.

It is the objective of this procedure to ensure:

- Situations where workers may be working alone in isolation and remote areas are identified;
- Appropriate control measures including effective communication with workers are implemented, monitored and maintained;
- Where Access4u workers are working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings, adequate arrangements are developed that minimise the risk of workers suffering an injury or illness;
- Access4u assess the risk posed to workers who may be engaged in tasks that involve working in remote or isolated workplaces and implement adequate control measures; and
- Access4u managers and workers are provided with guidance on the identification, assessment and control of the hazards associated with working alone or in isolation.

The Policy provides information and resources to ensure the safety of all persons working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings and also guidance on communication systems to ensure that they are:

- Provided and maintained where identified as required;
- Appropriate for the remote or isolated work conditions for which they are intended; and
- Implemented to ensure the safety of persons working in remote or isolated work conditions.

The adoption of safe work practices and the identification of hazards are mandatory.

# Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy



Responsibilities and delegations	
This policy applies to	Governing Body/ CEO, Managers, Staff, Volunteers
Specific responsibilities	<p><b>The Board</b> – Responsible for effective governance mechanisms are in place to ensure a safe environment.</p> <p><b>CEO/ Managers</b> – Responsible for monitoring and ensuring adherence to this Policy and related procedures. Ensuring due diligence and takes reasonable steps to ensure Access4u provides a safe environment and meets the Australian Standards.</p> <p>Employees, Contractors, Volunteers – Responsible for taking reasonable care for their own health and safety as well as taking reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others.</p>
Policy approval	CEO

Policy context – this policy relates to:	
Standards	Safe work SA / Australian Standards
Legislation	<p><i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)</i></p> <p><i>Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)</i></p>
Contractual obligations	
Organisation policies	Internal WHS and IM policies, procedures and processes.
Forms, record keeping, other documents	

## Procedures

### 1. Working Alone, Working in Remote and / or Working in Isolated Settings: A Common Risk

Working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings is a common risk for Access4u staff; both core (internal) and agency staff.

Our staff are often required to work after hours shifts to perform their work. This can occur both on Access4u' site facilities and on occasion, from their home location (but only where the home location has had a WHS inspection undertaken by an appropriate manager and the home location is approved as a "work location" by the CEO).

Access4u' staff are often required to work in alone, remotely or in isolation at client facilities (for example for short periods in a client home or on a night shift).

Accordingly, working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings is a critical matter for Access4u to manage at all times.

Access4u will take reasonably practicable steps to ensure the work health and safety of all persons working in remote or isolated work conditions through the identification and implementation of appropriate risk control measures as outlined in Risk Management Policy.

For Access4u, the major danger in working alone is sustaining an illness or injury that precludes self-

# Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy



rescue. The most common working alone situations arise during nights, weekends, and holidays. However, personnel may work in areas with no other personnel during normal working hours, as well.

## 2. Definition

Working alone and working in remote or isolated settings is defined as work carried out by a Access4u' staff member (internal and field staff) in an area where normal means of contact with another individual are not generally available, so that the potential risk of any existing hazard(s) is increased to an extent where extra precautions need to be taken. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Work that is isolated from the assistance of other persons because of the location, time or nature of the work.
- Work during home and community visits, after hours, country travel, working from home, working alone on and off site, working after hours or out of hours, working from a vehicle, driving long distances, working from home or from travel-based accommodation or workplace.

Australian jurisdictional Health and Safety Regulations define remote or isolated work as 'work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done'. Therefore:

- A worker may be considered alone or isolated even if other people may be close by (for example, a staff member working by themselves at night in an client's home (passive or active shifts). In other cases, a staff member may be far away from populated areas (for example a care worker providing services in a rural setting).
- Remote work may involve work activities undertaken at a location removed from an office environment where there are few people and where communications and travel are difficult.
- A staff member may be considered working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings even if other people may be close by. In some situations, a staff member may be alone for a short period of time, while in other situations they may be on their own for days or weeks in a remote location.

This Policy does define a minimum time period that a staff member has to be on their own for this to be considered "alone", "remotely" or "isolated". Each situation will be assessed according to its unique circumstances, considering the specific factors that may present a risk to the staff.

For purposes of this Policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions will apply:

Table 1. Applicable Definitions

Word	Definition
Remote and Isolated Work	<p>In relation to a worker, means work that is isolated from the assistance of other persons because of location, time or the nature of the work.</p> <p>These situations may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An area that is remote from others or isolated from the assistance of others because of the time, location or nature of work being carried out.</li><li>• In any work that is dangerous or hazardous for a person to perform alone</li></ul> <p>Can include the undertaking of work in an office or clients home</p>

# Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy



Word	Definition
	environment either in a remote location or in isolation from others, e.g. on a weekend or after hours.
Working Alone or in Isolation	A person is working alone when they cannot be seen or heard by another person and/or when they cannot expect a visit from another worker or member of the public for some time. This also refers to work being completed where there is no means of verbal or visual contact with another person.
Workplace	Any place where workers are working or may be expected to work. Includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. Examples of a workplace can include a vehicle, home, client's home etc
Buddy System	A cooperative practice of pairing two or more people together for mutual assistance and safety.

### 3. Examples of Working Alone

Working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings may involve:

- Working in an isolated area, on or off-site, including local or regular work sites, either during or outside normal working hours; and
- Workers working remotely or in isolation do not have access to normal safety arrangements that exist whilst on-site. As such, identification and application of special provision / precautions should be made available to them to ensure that work health and safety obligations are met and identified risks addressed.

Examples of working alone, in isolation and / or remotely may include:

- All work colleagues are out for all or part of the normal workday due to functions, meetings, seminars, transporting clients, home visits or lunch breaks;
- When providing a service to consumers on clients or at a consumer's home / sites or in the community;
- Working alone and unsupervised as a person rostered out of hours work (e.g. outside normal working hours), or on-call roster, working unsupervised in an Operations Office undertaking night allocations alone or working on a reduced roster on public holidays;
- Working in a distant- or difficult to access-geographical setting or remotely for the Operations Office location;
- Out of hours scheduling of appointments to meet client needs and travelling to and from the off-site location; and
- Travelling as part of work.

### 4. Responsibilities

The responsibilities relating to working alone or in remote localities are shared by:

# **Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy**



- Access4u and client management and line managers;
- Access4u clients; and
- Access4u employees (core and field staff) and contractors.

## **4.1. Executive and Senior Managers**

CEO, Senior Managers and Managers are accountable for:

- Implementing this Policy and ensuring compliance in areas under their control, including activities conducted at all Access4u sites.
- Ensuring that Access4u have and use appropriate resources and processes to eliminate and / or minimise risks to staff working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings.

## **4.2. Access4u Managers**

Access4u managers are to ensure that planning and provisions are in place for individuals who fall under the category of working alone so that their welfare is monitored by another individual.

The level of necessary monitoring is determined by the degree of hazard (based on the probability and severity of the risk) of the work, or the work environment.

Access4u managers are to ensure that plans to manage working alone in isolation for Access4u staff are in place and a risk assessment for each activity type where it requires a sole worker working alone, remotely or in isolated settings is prepared and approved by the CEO. This includes off-site work venues such as a Access4u-provided vehicles.

Access4u' managers / supervisors are to:

- Implement this Policy and associated procedures and assessments in the work areas for which they have responsibility;
- Identify, assess and control any hazards or risks associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings;
- Develop appropriate local procedures aligned with the level of risk associated with the work;
- Provide safe systems of work including suitable communication systems;
- Ensure appropriate supervision to workers required to work alone, in remote and / or in isolated settings;
- Provide appropriate induction / orientation, training and instructions;
- Consult with the relevant staff members on working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings issues; and
- Establish check-in times when travelling and working in geographical remote locations.

Access4u managers are to assess the fitness of staff to work alone in isolation. The following information may assist in assessing and determining suitability:

- Assessment at recruitment paying particular attention to duties to be performed;
- Annual checks for staff regularly working alone in isolation roles; and
- Assessment for occasional remote work.

# ***Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy***



Managers will also need to consider the following prior to authorising a worker to undertake work alone, in a remote and / or isolated setting:

- The level of supervision required for the worker(s) to complete the task;
- The competency and level of experience, skill and training of the staff undertaking the work;
- The number of people present in the area after normal working hours;
- The staff members' level of training in after-hours emergency procedures;
- Whether the work nature, equipment or substances (e.g. chemicals) or work location is considered high risk or too dangerous to be conducted in isolation;
- The level and type of access to a reliable method of communication, either landline phone or mobile phone;
- The level and type of security of the area where the work is to be performed;
- The method of access / egress from the building and route to transport; and
- The actual need for the worker to undertake work alone, in a remote and / or isolated setting.

Managers are also to conduct a hazard identification process using a risk assessment in consultation with staff. This will assist in identifying the issues relevant to the working environment and take action to limit the risk of an incident occurring.

## **4.3. National Manager, Health, Safety, Environment and Injury Management**

The Torrens Health National Manager, Health, Safety, Environment and Injury Management is accountable for:

- Maintaining this and all related Policies, and Procedures to ensure compliance and currency in line with operational and legislative requirements;
- Providing assistance and advice to managers and staff in the application of this and all related Policies, and Procedures at all times;
- Assisting Access4u Managers where required in the process of assessing and controlling workplace hazards / risks associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings; and
- Monitoring and reviewing currency and compliance within and across the Torrens Health Group with jurisdictional and industry standards via regular health and safety audits and / or spot checks.

## **4.4. Access4u Core (Internal) and Field Staff**

Access4u staff, including, core and agency staff, have an obligation to:

- Comply with reasonable instructions given by Access4u' managers relating to performance of working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings;
- Participate as required in the identification and assessment of risks associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings;
- Participate as required in the development and implementation of control measures to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings;

# **Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy**



- Immediately report to their line manager any apparent risks / hazards associated with working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings;
- Use and maintain relevant equipment, e.g. communication equipment;
- Carry a personal or, where supplied by Access4u, work supplied telephone with Access4u' after hours phone numbers easily identifiable;
- Maintain their personal vehicle in good condition and monitor the road conditions;
- Be familiar with all risk plans and work requirements, including all policies, procedures, work instructions and plans to manage working alone in isolation;
- Communicate risks, incidents, hazards and events associated with working alone or in isolation to Access4u managers;
- Only undertake activities that are covered by the policy, procedure and / or directions of their managers; and
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) where applicable and be trained in its use.

## **5. Risk Management**

### **5.1. Hazard and Risk Assessment**

Risk assessment is to be undertaken by the relevant manager for all activities where Access4u employees regularly undertake work alone, in remote and / or in isolated settings.

This is to be undertaken prior to approving workers to work alone, in remote and / or in isolated settings, a risk assessment will be undertaken before the work can be approved to commence.

The relevant Access4u manager must ensure that a risk assessment is completed.

Working alone or in isolated and / or remote locations may increase the likelihood of a hazard or risk and possibly the severity of that risk; for example a Access4u staff member working by themselves in a client home location setting may encounter challenging behaviours that would not necessarily be encountered during the day when parents of other workers are on the premises.

A number of foreseeable hazards and associated risks may be present when working alone in isolation and / or remotely on or off Access4u sites; or when work is undertaken outside of normal defined working hours. This may include, but not be limited to:

- Incidents involving sharps;
- Exposure to biological hazards;
- Hazardous chemical spills;
- Manual tasks, incident, slips, trips and falls;
- Challenging behaviour from a client, visitor, patient's relative, members of the public etc. Emergency (fire, power failure etc.), medical emergency, trespassers, unauthorised personnel, client or unknown person in or around the premises, dogs and other animals, insects etc.; and
- Using vehicles and / or working from home. In addition, a number of foreseeable hazards and risks may present when working from a vehicle or travelling to and from worksites. This may include, but not be limited to:
  - Vehicle breakdown;

# ***Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy***



- Fuel availability;
- Collision (other vehicle, wildlife, livestock);
- Driving conditions (weather, terrain, visibility, road closures);
- Driver fatigue;
- Medical emergency;
- Emergency (bush fire, flood); and
- Manual tasks and ergonomics.

Some of the factors that need to be considered are:

- Availability of first aid / emergency assistance;
- Violence / security;
- Hazards that may result from contact with native or introduced fauna and flora;
- Implementation of practicable hazard control measures, including informing employees about the hazards;
- Providing appropriate personal protective equipment;
- Implementing specific work procedures;
- Providing suitable first aid equipment; and
- Communicable diseases (such as TB and Hepatitis A and B).

## **5.2. Risk Considerations**

The potential risk of injury or illness from existing hazards may be increased in these unique working environments and may require additional precautions to be taken. Therefore, each work activity or situation proposed must be considered in terms of associated risk factors to determine the degree of exposure and level of potential harm involved.

The following risk considerations should be considered but are not limited to:

- Work environment (clientele, geographical terrain, climate, animals)
- Remote premises / accommodation (location of office in premises, plant and equipment)
- Communication systems and procedures
- Physical and psychological fitness for duty (fatigue management, disease and existing medical conditions, taking of medications, allergies)
- Vehicles and travel arrangements (land, sea and air)
- Information, training and supervision
- Security of the area and emergency plans.

## **5.3. Risk Controls**

Risk controls are to be developed, undertaken and enforced by the relevant manager for all activities where Access4u employees regularly undertaken work alone in isolation. Controls must be developed using the hierarchy of control, be documented and used to induct and train workers working alone,

# ***Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy***



working in remote and / or working in isolated settings.

Risk control measures may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Documenting management approval for workers required to alone, work off-site, remotely, in isolation or after hours;
- Appropriate work area design, i.e., security and ingress / egress;
- Planning prior to remote area travel;
- Provision of suitable, reliable communication equipment which has been pre-tested and for which workers have been trained in its use;
- Regular communication, periodic visits or scheduled call-in procedures and safety / security visits by other workers or other managers;
- Effective means of response in an incident / emergency; and
- Contingency plans.

Where workers are undertaking office / computer-based work or work having been assessed as low risk, the following control measures should be implemented:

- Workers working outside normal operating hours advise the manager or alternate contact person that they are on site and again when they are leaving.
- Use of security measures, e.g. lock doors, walk in well-lit areas.
- Where duration of lone work time is going to be greater than three hours, arrange times to phone the manager or alternate contact person to confirm personal safety.

The extent of these arrangements will be dependent on the type of work undertaken, the frequency and personnel involved.

Some job functions may present a level of risk where workers should not work alone, in remote and / or in isolated settings. In these circumstances, implementation of a 'buddy system' shall be considered. A 'buddy system' can assist Access4u in ensuring that health and safety risks to workers performing the activity are minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

## **6. Working Alone Arrangements**

### **6.1. Effective Communication Technologies**

Communication devices selected must be able to operate in the location and environment where the work is to be undertaken. Mobile phone coverage is not reliable in all environments and therefore the selection of the communication device(s) must also be evaluated for reliability and effectiveness.

The relevant manager must ensure effective communication options are available to all workers working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings.

Subject to risk assessment the provision of more than one means of communication may be required.

The amount of contact required whilst working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings will depend on the potential risk as determined through risk assessment.

Current communication technologies deployed across Access4u to manage lone or isolated work may include:

- Mobile phones;

# **Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy**



- Landlines; and

In the selection and use of these devices, managers / supervisors and workers are to:

- Check the network coverage area available to your telephone network before departure; and
- Where work conducted is of higher risk (e.g., where workers may not be able to render assistance if injured) utilise personal GPS safety devices such as SPOT Generation 4 satellite Tracer Trak etc.

## **6.2. Reporting Incidents**

Reporting incidents is a fundamental obligation of all staff, particularly when working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings.

Reporting incidents is to be undertaken using the following methods:

- Direct telephone call to relevant Manager
- Incident Report.

Incidents that should be reported include:

- Injuries to clients or workers;
- Emergency situations; and
- Near miss incidents where there is no injury but requires preventative action.

Access4u' managers are to ensure that:

- All staff are provided with and briefed on reporting and emergency procedures;
- Early reporting of identified hazards, injuries, near misses or concerns or changes in client circumstances by staff is part of normal work duties; and
- Reporting of concerns by staff to Access4u' managers and supervisors are documented, including those communicated via telephone.

## **6.3. Escalation Process**

The relevant manager is required to develop procedures that cover emergency or incident circumstances that includes situations where a worker is not contactable or has not met the agreed communication strategy / timelines.

These procedures should include an escalation process within the divisional management hierarchy.

Considerations include:

- Distress call response;
- Procedures to initiate contact with overdue workers;
- Initiating emergency response where workers are un-contactable; and
- Escalation framework to notify senior management.

## **6.4. Emergency Situations**

### **6.4.1 Procedures**

Suitable communications for emergency use must be made available by the relevant manager.

# **Working Alone, Remotely and in Isolated Settings Policy**



Where a worker suffers an injury or illness whilst working alone, working in remote and / or working in isolated settings and is able to use a means of communication, contact is to be made immediately with the relevant manager / supervisor / allocations team or agreed alternate contact person advising them of the situation.

An incident and injury report will be required in accordance with the Incident Report and Investigation Procedure.

Managers and supervisors are accountable for ensuring that adequate first aid provisions are available to lone workers based on the level of risk as per the associated risk assessment and the First Aid Procedure.

## **6.4.2 After Hours Emergency**

In the event of an emergency situation occurring after hours, workers should contact the relevant manager or designated contact person.

If the situation is assessed as being life threatening or immediate assistance is not available, Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance) should be contacted on 000.

## **6.5. Training**

Before commencing isolated work, the worker/s involved must be familiar with the requirements of this policy along with other relevant Access4u' and local procedures.

Workers must have the required capabilities and knowledge necessary to carry out the work required in a safe manner. Where such skills and knowledge are lacking, appropriate training must be provided such as:

- Use of communication equipment and / or other devices provided;
- Local site operating procedure requirements; and
- Hazard, incident and injury reporting arrangements.

## **6.6. Travel**

All staff are to exercise due care when travelling in a vehicle for work purposes:

- Workers will travel in Access4u' vehicles when they are offered and available.
- Where predicted, notified or advertised hazardous environmental conditions exist, workers will contact appropriate service providers to determine risks prior to commencing the journey e.g., bushfire, flooding etc.
- Wherever possible and practical (and only where approved by an appropriate Access4u delegate), Access4u' workers will not self-drive to / from remote locations.

## **7. Deviation from this Policy**

Any deviation from this Policy will require a risk assessment to be undertaken by the relevant manager and changes can only be approved by the CEO after consideration by the National Manager, Health, Safety, Environment and Injury Management and Board through the Managing Director Torrens Health.