

STAYING IN TOUCH POLICY

Purpose

1. This policy provides options for how ACT Government employees and workplaces can stay in touch while the employee is on extended leave.

Application

2. This policy contains a set of whole of government instructions issued by the Head of Service under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* which binds all employees and officers engaged under that Act.

Background

3. The ACT Government is committed to giving employees the opportunity to stay in touch with the workplace while on periods of extended leave.
4. Staying in touch assists employees in remaining up to date with workplace news and changes, maintain connections with colleagues and helps their transition back to work.

Principles

5. The ACT Government places importance on staff knowing that they are important and valued members of the workforce and recognises that this may be an issue during periods that they are away from their usual workplace. The Staying in Touch policy provides guidance where employees and workplaces want to maintain a connection to work while on leave.

Responsibilities

6. Employees and their manager/supervisors have a shared responsibility to negotiate stay in touch arrangements on a case by case basis. This is achieved through the employee and their manager/supervisor discussing whether a particular employee would like the workplace to stay in touch and if so mutually agreeing on how and when to stay in touch, what information is appropriate to provide and the frequency of contact.
7. Even where an employee elects not to stay in touch, situations may arise where parties must contact or consult with each other – for example if there are organisational changes that may impact the employee on their return, or the

employee has changed personal circumstances and requires new adjustments to enable their transition back to work.

When to stay in touch

8. Discussions regarding the preferred type and frequency of contact should be suitable for both the employee and the workplace, and are best made before the employee takes leave. Any negotiated contact arrangements will further depend on the type of leave taken. In the case of extended unplanned leave occurring it is important for both the employee and the workplace to make contact to discuss staying in touch as soon as practicable whilst sensitively taking into account the employee's personal circumstances.
9. **Appendix 1** provides an example of a "Stay in Touch Plan" that can be used as a basis for discussion. Having an informal or formal plan to facilitate discussion between the employee and the manager/supervisor provides direction for both parties.
10. It is recognised that not all employees want or need the same level of contact and employees are not obliged to complete a Staying in Touch plan, however the manager/supervisor should offer staying in touch as an option

Ways to stay in touch

11. There are a variety of methods to facilitate "Staying in Touch" arrangements. There are a number of examples listed at **Appendix 2:** "Methods of Staying in Touch with staff".

Additional "Keep In Touch" arrangements

12. For employees on Maternity, Primary Care Giver and Parental Leave, the ACT Enterprise Agreements may outline additional arrangements or entitlements to assist you to "Keep in Touch". Please refer to the relevant enterprise agreement for further details.

Legislative Reference

13. The key principles of this policy are aligned with the following authorised sources:
 - *Public Sector Management Act 1994*
 - ACTPS Enterprise Agreements
 - *Fair Work Act 2009* (Commonwealth)
 - ACTPS Respect Equity and Diversity (RED) Framework
 - ACTPS Work Health and Safety Policy 2012 – Managing Injury and Illness in the Workplace

- *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010 (Commonwealth)*

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Commissioner for Public Administration
on behalf of Kathy Leigh, Head of Service

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