



Staying in Touch Policy

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ISSUED BY: WORKFORCE CAPABILITY
AND GOVERNANCE, CMTEDD

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Introduction/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 is a whole-of-government strategy issued by the Head of Service under section 17(2)(a) of the [Public Sector Management Act 1994](#) (PSM Act) and binds all employees engaged under the PSM Act and all public sector employers within the meaning of section 152(1)(a) of the PSM Act.
3. For the purpose of this policy, employees are defined as including [executives, permanent officers, temporary employees, casual workers, and a public sector employer's staff member who is employed on either a permanent or temporary basis] (remove any that are not included).
4. For the purpose of this policy, any necessary change is made to the terms of the policy so as to apply the policy to a public sector employer and their staff members.

Background

5. The ACT Government is committed to giving employees the opportunity to stay in touch with the workplace while on periods of extended leave.
6. 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

7. 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

8. 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.
9. 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

10. 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.

11. **Attachment 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.
12. 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

13. There are a variety of methods to facilitate “Staying in Touch” arrangements. There are a number of examples listed at **Attachment 2**: “Methods of Staying in Touch with staff”

Additional “Keep in Touch” Arrangements

14. 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 References

- a. [*Public Sector Management Act 1994*](#)
- b. [*ACTPS Enterprise Agreements*](#)
- c. [*Fair Work Act 2009 \(Commonwealth\)*](#)
- d. [*ACTPS Respect Equity and Diversity \(RED\) Framework*](#)
- e. [*ACTPS Work Health and Safety Policy 2012 – Managing Injury and Illness in the Workplace*](#)
- f. [*Paid Parental Leave Act 2010 \(Commonwealth\)*](#)

Review

15. This Policy is due for review 3 years from the last issued or reviewed date, or earlier where there are changes that affect the operation of this policy.

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Approval Authority

Bronwen Overton-Clarke
Commissioner for Public Administration
Workforce Capability and Governance
Chief Ministers, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
On behalf of Kathy Leigh, Head of Service
July 2015

Attachment 1

Staying In Touch Plan

Staying in Touch Plan

Staff Member:

Manager:

Period of Leave:

Select preferred method of contact and provide contact details:

Contact is to be made:

- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Bi monthly
- As required according to the selections below

The staff member would like to be provided with the following information while on leave when it arises:

- Copies of staff and branch meeting minutes
- Learning and Development Opportunities
- WHoG Notices: e.g. Vacancies/Promotions/RSS Feeds
- Notification of Policies or initiatives of relevance to the staff member
- Participation in staff surveys
- Notification of staff/management changes within the area
- Invitations to social events: e.g. Xmas parties/farewells
- Health and wellbeing activities: e.g. Flu vaccinations
- Changes or restructures to work area or position duties
- Enterprise Bargaining negotiations
- Other:

Other comments (e.g. privacy requested for three weeks after having baby):

Staff member's signature:

Date:

Supervisor's signature:

Date:

Both Parties agree on the above staying in touch plan. Changes are to be made as required.

Attachment 2

Methods of 'Staying in touch' with staff

Various organisations and departments are introducing 'Staying in Touch Programs' for staff on extended periods of leave. These programs are designed to provide staff with information on key changes within the workplace and aid with the transition back to work by discussing suitable working arrangements (particularly if the staff member's work-life balance commitments have changed).

There are a number of ways to ensure that staff members continue to feel 'connected' to the work place while on leave, however, it is advisable that arrangements are discussed with the staff member prior to leave commencing. Staying in Touch with staff should apply in all cases unless there is a specific reason not to. Please see below some examples, methods and responsibilities of how to stay in touch:

Example	Method	Responsibility
Developing a 'Staying in Touch' Plan	Refer to the template in Attachment 1	Manager/supervisor and staff on leave
Contact (in general)	phone calls/emails/text messages	Manager/supervisor and staff on leave
Team Correspondence	Copies of staff meeting and branch meeting minute	Manager/supervisor
Learning and Development(L&D) Opportunities	Forwarded emails/phone calls of particular staff L&D interest as indicated by staff Personal Development Plan (PDP)	Manager/supervisor
Monthly newsletters	Forwarded electronically or mail	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member
Advertising	Notices of job vacancies-promotions within the team	Manager/supervisor
New policies or initiatives	Policies or initiatives of relevance to the staff member	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member
Staff Surveys	Staff member is provided with the opportunity to participate	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member
Staff/management changes	Notification of changes to the work area	Manager
Social events	Invitations to – Christmas parties, farewells etc	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member
Health and wellbeing activities	Notification of events, for example flu vaccinations	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member
Restructures to work areas	Restructures or changes to position duties are notified to the absent staff member	Manager
Enterprise Agreement bargaining negotiations	Staff member is provided with the opportunity to receive information	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member
Cards/Postcards	Provides an opportunity for the workplace to write messages of support/congratulations for the valued staff member.	Manager/supervisor or delegated team member



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