During the Q&A session of the webinar, a number of questions were either taken on notice or were not addressed in time. Here we look back at these questions with considered answers below:

Changing from a time-based model to a productivity-based model is potentially easier for salaried people than those that are waged. How would you go about managing waged people who, very often, would feel guilty about not working 'their hours'?

There is no simple answer to this question as it is dependent upon a number of factors such as:

1. The business reason for WFA,
2. Type of work undertaken by the employee,
3. Current devolution and implementation of business planning into employee daily, weekly, monthly tasks,
4. Level of maturity and experience of the staff member in their role,
5. Degree of autonomy in delivering outcomes, etc.

WFA and working from home strategies, when implemented properly, have delivered a marked increase in productivity for business. It often takes an employee less time to complete their tasks when working from home than it does in an office environment. This is due to several contributing factors including the fact that the employee generally will be afforded greater control and flexibility in when work is done. Further, even where family is present, the home office is likely to be less distracting allowing the employee increased ability to remain focused on the task at hand.

In contrast, whilst an office-based work environment does not result in greater productivity, the distractions in the office space are often productive in other ways such as providing ad-hoc opportunity for team collaboration and feedback as well as on-the-job learning. All these things utilise working hours.

Given this, it is then important to understand why you are implementing a WFA approach. Is it simply to provide an alternative work venue whilst we see out this pandemic? If so, then you may determine that maintaining the status quo on productivity and output is enough and that a wage based employee, like a salaried employee is expected to continue to deliver on these measures in the time it takes and they will be taken to have worked their standard hours regardless.

However, if the approach is being adopted to deliver a broader benefit to business, then a more comprehensive approach is needed including careful selection of employees and roles that will operate under WFA, robust business planning and clear performance expectations established, each role, the respective responsibilities and objectives reviewed to properly align performance expectations with the WFA model and the ensure the tasks and duties expected of each employee are established against the employees contracted hours of work.

Once an agreed corporate understanding of why WFA is being applied in the workplace and what this means for the business, the respective expectations and implications need to be clearly communicated to the employee and their performance output managed effectively. This may very well mean that a wage-based employee completes all their duties in less time than they would in the office. What each employer may wish their employees to do with the remaining hours needs to be determined and communicated, including where the employee is only to be measured on output, not hours.

None-the-less, it is important to consider any potential longer-term implications and to be clear the WFA performance expectations are temporary where they are in place due to the pandemic and once this period has passed, normal business operations will resume.

What can you stipulate in Agreements about WFA and home caring responsibilities, i.e. school closures. What is fair and reasonable managing flexibility and productivity?

What are your thoughts around work from home staff with children that have limited boundaries with small children, walking in and out all day through meetings, and so on? Should we be commenting on people's parenting strategies when it impacts their work?

The current pandemic-related circumstances do not dramatically alter what is considered fair and reasonable, but it does create some additional challenges that need to be considered when determining how a WFA agreement might operate.

Where an employee is also needing to balance caring and/or schooling responsibilities, it is important to place some agreed parameters around blocks of time that are dedicated to family needs and work needs. Distractions are inevitable in any work environment, but in a home environment you may also wish to consider agreeing on how long a distraction needs to last before it becomes a break from work which is then subtracted from the employees recorded hours.

This clarity is important to be documented in your WFA agreement for a range of business reasons and is also critical in providing clarity regarding cover for workplace health and safety.

In establishing the agreed work schedule, it is important to examine your prevailing industrial framework to ensure that the employee WFA ordinary hours are within the established bandwidth for the enterprise.

Once you have examined these aspects, it may become evident that the employee does not have sufficient time to maintain their existing contracted work hours. This then steers you towards a conversation about whether you as a business are happy to maintain current pay in the knowledge that the employee is not working their contracted hours but is able to meet the expected level of productivity: or if alternative flexibilities need to also be negotiated in order to support the employee through this time such as part-time or a temporary reduction in hours.

Does anyone have a "work log" record sheet we could use for staff to record what they are doing and plan for what they will be doing?

Suggestion from participants included two software systems: ASANA and Monday.com.

How do you go about employment and new starters under the working away programme?

This would be a great example of how the WFA Toolbox would be used. The organisation would overlay its current recruitment and transfer policy and procedure over the current workplace circumstances and make adjustment to reflect the realities of the operating and broader social environment.