Working From Anywhere Policy and Procedures

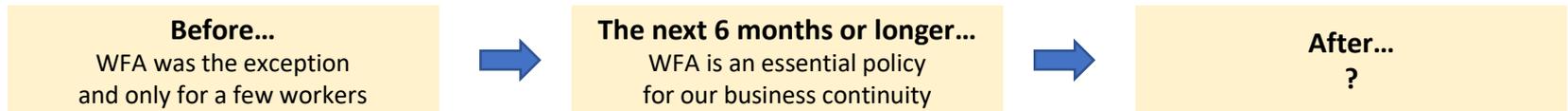## An overview of our suggested approach

HBA Consulting

"We will be living with this virus for at least six months, so social distancing measures to slow this virus down must be sustainable for at least that long to protect Australian lives, allow Australia to keep functioning and keep Australians in jobs."

Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, 22 March 2020

The Context

Working From Anywhere (WFA) arrangements are now seen as a real solution to business continuity during this challenging time. This is a fundamental shift for most organisations that have used it as an exception to standard practices that apply to only a few staff.

Before… WFA was the exception and only for a few workers	→	**The next 6 months or longer…** WFA is an essential policy for our business continuity	→	**After…** ?

- For most organisations, WFA has been used as a 'by exception' model.

- Maternity leave, parenting and carers leave and injury recovery have been typical examples of the reasons for granting WFA requests. These are generally short-term periods and can if needed (at least in theory) be supplemented when needed by a 'visit to the office'.

- WFA policies and procedures therefore have tended to be a second or third level priority – able to be pulled out in the unlikely event that they might be needed.

- Common concerns, or managerial resistance to embracing WFA, have often been driven by challenges including employee/manager trust, visibility and access to people, communication, performance management and productivity as well as WHS and IT/ security.

- Limited guidance has been provided to managers who have WFA employees in their teams and the same limited guidance occurs on the employee side. Much is left to informal arrangements between the direct supervisor and the individual employee.

- As a result, moving to an immediate reversal of the entrenched and well-known employment model based around physically collocated workers comes with significant challenges and policy and procedural gaps.
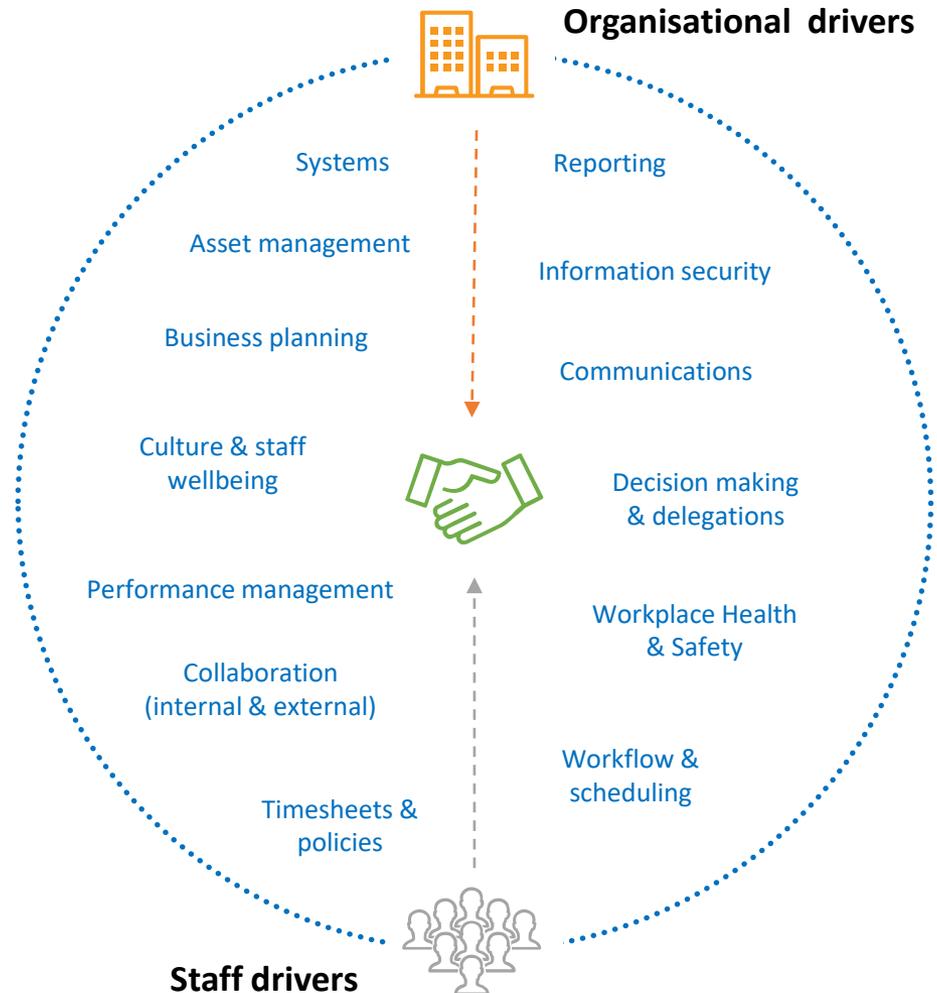
Signposts to creating a WFA Toolbox

The following suggestions can help to clarify the focus for delivering a pragmatic and practical suite of materials

- Given the scale, timeframes and emotion connected with the commencement of WFA arrangements in the current environment, we suggest that a toolbox should be established to provide a single, integrated reference point for managers and employees.

- This means that as well as 'filling in gaps' between any existing WFA policy and procedures and the emerging realities of the COVID-19 impact on workplaces, the WFA toolbox should draw in rather than cross reference existing related and relevant policies and procedures.

- The rationale for this is that it will be a significant cultural and work practice change – the employer needs to make it easy to find the framing guidance for employees.

- The more fragmented the location of the guidance, the more likely that unintended or contradictory approaches to key policy and procedural elements will occur.

- So, in building the WFA Toolbox, embed other relevant policies and procedures into it – e.g. leave application, time keeping, performance management etc.

- It may be the case that existing policies and procedures are already out of date and in need of review due to being non-compliant with existing legislation, guidance or contemporary workplace practice.

Signposts to creating a WFA Toolbox

Ensuring all relevant people management matters are properly considered

- WFA needs more than IT systems, WH&S and security matters to work effectively.

- It requires much broader thinking.

- The guidance needs to set the framework for how to work in a mode that is vastly different to traditional office-based arrangements.

- As a result, organisations need to incorporate and adjust many of their existing people management processes to take into account WFA flexibilities.

- Organisations and their staff will both seek clarity on a wide range of connected issues.

Organisational drivers

Systems

Reporting

Asset management

Information security

Business planning

Communications

Culture & staff wellbeing

Decision making & delegations

Performance management

Workplace Health & Safety

Collaboration (internal & external)

Workflow & scheduling

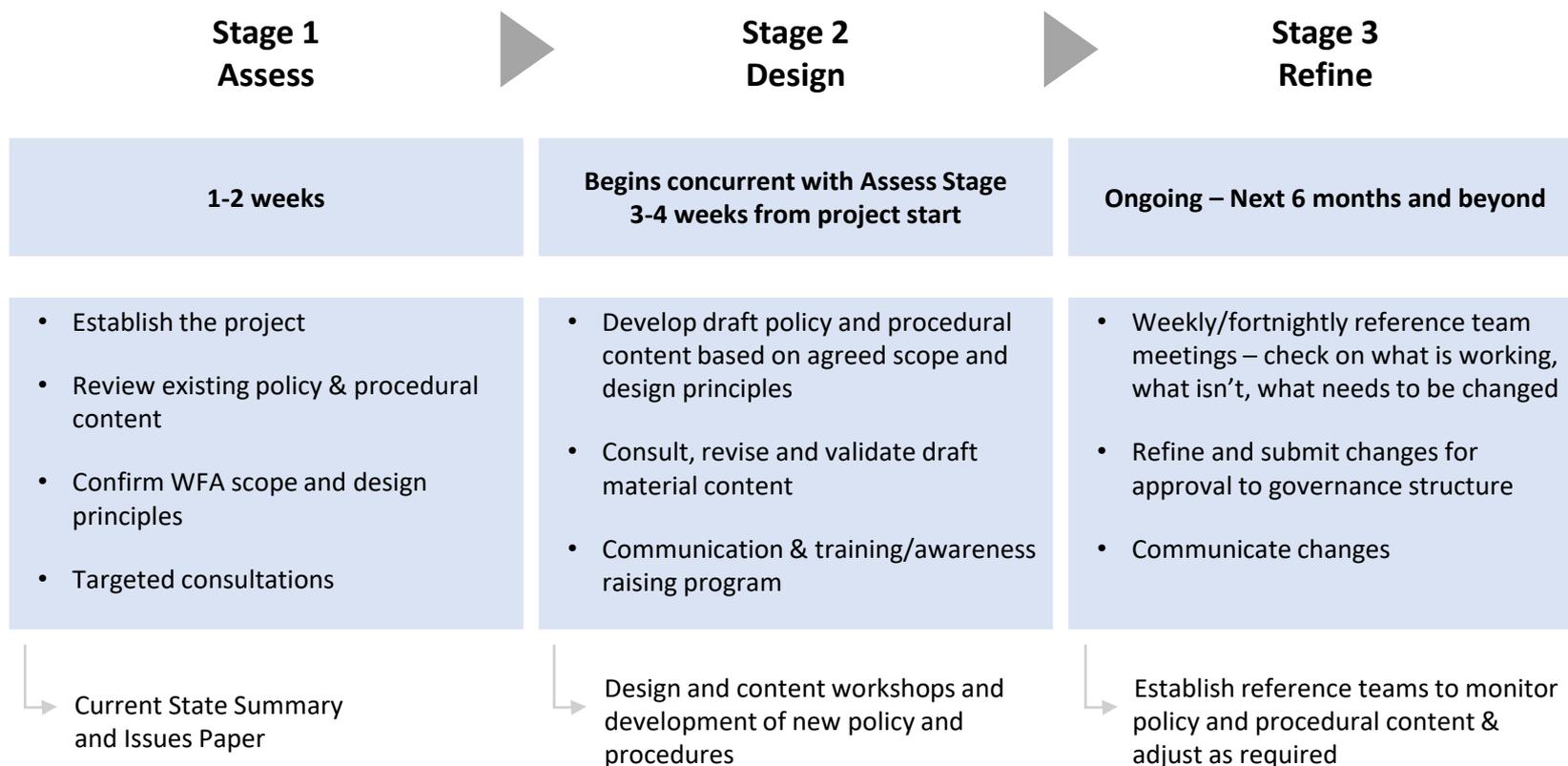Timesheets & policies

Staff drivers

Signposts to creating WFA Toolbox

Building the procedures so they can be easily applied

- At the procedural level, the approach needs to be text minimal and process mapping heavy.

- Employees need to be able to:

  - quickly see the role that they play in a procedure

  - have clarity around the other roles in it, and

  - when and how they come into play to deliver the ultimate outcome.

- We suggest that the process maps be dynamic online products not paper based, folder bound guidance.

- This enables real time adjustments as improvements to procedures are identified once the related WFA policy and procedures are 'stress tested' over time.

- This provides a 'single source of policy and procedural truth' to enable employees and managers to work confidently, efficiently and effectively in a work environment that is evolving and different to what many have been so familiar with.

An indicative project plan

Stage 1 Assess		Stage 2 Design		Stage 3 Refine
1-2 weeks		**Begins concurrent with Assess Stage 3-4 weeks from project start**		**Ongoing – Next 6 months and beyond**
• Establish the project • Review existing policy & procedural content • Confirm WFA scope and design principles • Targeted consultations		• Develop draft policy and procedural content based on agreed scope and design principles • Consult, revise and validate draft material content • Communication & training/awareness raising program		• Weekly/fortnightly reference team meetings – check on what is working, what isn't, what needs to be changed • Refine and submit changes for approval to governance structure • Communicate changes
Current State Summary and Issues Paper		Design and content workshops and development of new policy and procedures		Establish reference teams to monitor policy and procedural content & adjust as required

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the ideas and issues raised, please contact one of the team.

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