

Business Continuity – Planning and preparation in response to COVID-19

When you have a disruption like COVID 19 you need a business continuity plan. The key objective in establishing a business continuity plan (BCP) is to minimise interruption to the organisation's critical functions and critical assets, including to:

- minimise business, organisation and reputation risks to the department
- control expenditure and reduce any extraordinary costs caused by a disruption.

Incident Management Team (IMT)

To manage the execution of your BCP you should set up an IMT. The IMT is comprised of senior management who meet daily and to collectively respond to, manage, and recover from a disruption and to continue Critical Functions, protect Critical Assets and restore business-as-usual.

Managing business disruptions (four stage)

1. Initial response
2. Activation
3. Response and Recovery
4. Restoration of Services (post-incident review and reporting)

Business Continuity Planning and Preparation

Comprehensive planning and preparation is critical in effective business continuity practices.

- Business Impact Analysis (BIA) – a fundamental tool for identifying the critical functions of a business. A BIA systematically identifies and analyses critical business activities, and is used to assess the impact of a business disruption on those activities. Core components involved in the BIA involve consideration to Business Activity, Priority and Enabling Services.
- Continuity Strategy Development – for each critical function identified in the BIA, a high level continuity strategy should be developed, enabling the protection and restoration of identified critical business functions, with consideration to working under various scenarios.
- Contingency Kits – it is best practice for divisions with identified critical activities to prepare contingency kits in advance of a business disruption. Contingency kits contain items identified from the BIA as required to support critical business functions, and strategies. For example: remote access tokens, hardcopies of documents (including BCPs) and contact details.
- Review, testing and maintenance of BCPs – reviewing a BCP following a disruptive event is paramount, as is regular testing and maintenance of the BCP.

Crisis Communication and Messaging

Establishing and maintaining effective communication tools capable of contacting and accounting for staff in an emergency or crisis situation is critical.

- Phone tree – a phone tree is a system for contacting a large number of people quickly in which each person called then contacts a number of other designated people. Consideration must be given to the structure, messaging and activation of the phone tree system.
- MessageStick – instant messaging tool for communicating emergency updates to employees.
- Email updates – employees receive regular COVID-19 email updates
- COVID-19 intranet page - provides employees with coronavirus updates relevant to their employment, with information and links to external resources and webpages.

Key resources and supporting documents

- [Department of Health: COVID-19 health alerts](#) – detailed health updates, information and advice
- [Australian Public Service Commission \(APSC\) Novel coronavirus](#) – information on workplace principles for minimising the spread of COVID-19.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – COVID-19 updates and advice:
 - [Travel updates](#)
 - [DFAT COVID-19 – information for Australian travellers](#)
 - [DFAT COVID-19 – information about home isolation when unwell \(suspected or confirmed cases\)](#)
 - [DFAT COVID-19 – information on social distancing](#)
- [Fair Work Commission – Coronavirus advice and Australian workplace law](#) – advice and guidance to employers
- [ANAO – Business Continuity Management Audit Report](#) – Details and provides guidance on the business continuity practices and
- [Business Queensland](#) – provides practical, plain-language advice and guidance on BC, applicable to both industry and government