

SA Health

# Policy

Remote or Isolated Work

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Government  
of South Australia

SA Health

## 1. Name of Policy

Remote or Isolated Work

## 2. Policy statement

This policy provides the mandatory requirements to meet the legislative obligations of the [Work Health and Safety Act 2012 \(SA\)](#) and where relevant the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2017](#) (more commonly known as 'Gayle's Law') ensuring SA Health workplaces implement a comprehensive approach to identify, assess, and control remote or isolated work hazards and risks, as far as reasonably practicable.

## 3. Applicability

This policy applies to all employees and contracted staff of SA Health; that is all employees and contracted staff of the Department for Health and Wellbeing (DHW), Local Health Networks (LHNs) including state-wide services aligned with those Networks and SA Ambulance Service (SAAS).

This policy requirements must be considered for inclusion in contracts and/or agreements for labour hire agency staff, contractors, volunteers, and students on clinical placements.

## 4. Policy principles

SA Health's approach to remote or isolated work is underpinned by the following principles:

- > We commit to having a safe working environment for all workers undertaking remote or isolated work.
- > We apply a hazard identification and risk management process to establish effective risk control mechanisms related to remote or isolated work.
- > We provide communication systems to support our workers who undertake remote or isolated work.
- > We ensure workers have access to safe systems of work and support for providing services for out of hours or unscheduled callouts in remote areas of South Australia, in accordance with legislative requirements.
- > We commit to supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people by continuing to build a culturally responsive workplace and support delivery of health services in alignment with the Aboriginal Health Care Framework.

## 5. Policy requirements

DHW, LHNs and SAAS must establish local systems which:

- > Identify remote or isolated work hazards and assess the risk to the health and safety of workers including:
  - working on or off site, in isolation or remotely,
  - working from a vehicle, or
  - working after hours/out of hours, or for a callout whether scheduled or unscheduled.
- > Minimise and manage the risks associated with remote or isolated work through:
  - the provision of risk management systems
  - the provision of robust and effective communication processes
  - the implementation and monitoring of communication systems for workers
  - the provision of a second responder when attending an out of hours or unscheduled callout in remote areas of South Australia

- the development of appropriate plans and/or safe work procedures, and
- the provision of ancillary equipment required for:
  - effective communication allowing a worker to call for assistance at any time during the service of remote or isolated work
  - rescue
  - medical and first aid, and
  - emergency situations.
- > Establish adequate safe work procedures for common remote or isolated work tasks, and/or where required, contingency plans are developed with specific remote or isolated work situations.
  - Safe work procedures must be consulted with worker(s) and approved by the appropriate line manager on guiding worker decision making and actions.
- > Consult with workers undertaking remote or isolated work and complete a risk assessment.
  - This may involve conducting a review of established local safe work procedures associated with each remote or isolated work situation.
  - Risk assessments must consider all conditions likely to be experienced and relevant to perform the task, including ensuring the provision of the required services through consultation with other relevant parties.
  - If a risk assessment determines the residual risk level is unacceptable to proceed with the service, task, or travel, or is deemed to be unsafe for the worker(s), the hierarchy of controls must be used to determine suitable controls or other options for service delivery explored.
- > Establish and support local operational and decision-making processes associated with remote or isolated work and consult with workers and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) to implement controls to eliminate or minimise risks as reasonably practicable.
- > Assess and provide prior authorisation by a delegated authority for workers to undertake scheduled:
  - work visits alone or in isolation; or
  - working remotely on a regular basis as part of their role (including working from home arrangements).
- > Ensure local processes to report all workplace hazards, incidents and injuries involving remote or isolated work are in accordance with SA Health Work Health Safety & Injury Management (WHSIM) System requirements.
- > Provide workers with necessary information, supervision, and training to:
  - address the risks of remote or isolated work
  - meet the requirements of legislation, SA Health policy or local procedures as applicable
  - undertake associated activities including security monitoring and communication procedures
  - complete the safe use of appropriate/suitable transport or equipment
  - participate in, and where applicable lead, debriefing post remote or isolated work, and
  - access and provide post-incident support services as required.
- > Ensure local processes target hazards and risks associated with remote or isolated work within existing monitoring and review programs.

All workers must comply with the requirements in [Appendix 1: Remote or Isolated Work Mandatory Instruction](#).

### Gayle's Law

The requirements of the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2017](#) (more commonly known as 'Gayle's Law') only apply to health practitioners.

DHW, LHNs and SAAS must:

- > Establish and maintain a pool of suitable second responders in accordance with legislative requirements.
  - This includes alternative second responders in the case where the initial second responder is unavailable.
  - Suitable second responders require a current Australian driver's licence, a working with children's check (within five years) and are not prohibited from working with children in another State or Territory.
- > Ensure a second responder accompanies health service workers providing services in a remote area that are out of hours or unscheduled callout, unless as otherwise prescribed.
  - A second responder is not required if the callout is to a police station, and/or it is verified that at least one police officer will be always present while the health practitioners is in attendance.
  - A second responder is not required if the callout is in response to an emergency, e.g., highway vehicle accident, and it is verified that at least one emergency services worker (other than the health practitioner) will be always present.
- > Ensure health service providers for a remote area actively record information.
  - This includes the number of second responders the provider has access to or employs, and the proportion of shifts, if any, where it has not been possible to roster a second responder.
  - If a health service worker has not been provided with a second responder when required, information why a second responder was unavailable (i.e., not available, urgency of the situation) and the patient outcome must be documented.
- > Record, where a contravention of legislative requirements relating to Gayle's Law has occurred:
  - The profession of the health practitioner
  - Date, time and location of the incident
  - The nature of the incident, and
  - Any impact on the health and safety of the worker.

### Cultural awareness

DHW, LHNs and SAAS must:

- > Ensure workers required to travel to Aboriginal communities are provided with relevant information, training, or awareness on how to engage with Aboriginal people in a culturally respectful and effective way.

## 6. Mandatory related documents

The following documents must be complied with under this Policy, to the extent that they are relevant:

- > [Domestic Travel Policy](#) (for SA Health internal use only)
- > [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2017](#)
- > [Overseas Travel Policy](#) (for SA Health internal use only)
- > [Travel and Fringe Benefits Tax Policy](#) (for SA Health internal use only)
- > [WHS Policy](#)
- > [Work Health and Safety Act 2012 \(SA\)](#)
- > [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#)

## 7. Supporting information

### Remote or Isolated Work supporting information:

For SA Health internal use only -

- > Remote or Isolated Work Guideline
- > [Remote or Isolated Travel Work Plan](#)
- > [Remote or Isolated Work Safety Guide](#)
- > [Remote or Isolated Work Risk Assessment Template](#)
- > [Remote or Isolated Work Communications Systems Fact Sheet](#)

### Associated supporting information:

- > [Aboriginal Health Care Framework 2023 – 2031](#)
- > [Aboriginal Workforce Framework 2023-2031](#)
- > Driving Safe Policy
- > [Employee Assistance Program Policy](#)
- > [Flexible Workplaces Policy](#) (for SA Health internal use only)
- > [Gayle's Law Policy and Procedure Checklist Tool](#)
- > [Hazard Identification and Risk Management Policy](#) (for SA Health internal use only)
- > Positive Behaviour Support Policy (in draft - previously [Preventing and Responding to Challenging Behaviour](#)) (for SA Health internal use only)
- > [Psychosocial Safety Policy](#)
- > [SA Health Gayle's Law](#)
- > [SA Health Insurance Arrangements](#) (for SA Health internal use only)

## 8. Definitions

- > **Health practitioner:** means any person working as a health practitioner within the meaning of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (South Australia) Act 2010* or any other person declared by the regulations to be included in the ambit of this definition.
- > **Health service:** means a health service within the meaning of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (South Australia) Act 2010* or any other service or activity declared by the regulations to be included in the ambit of this definition.
- > **Isolated work:** work that is isolated from the assistance of other people – including rescue, medical assistance, and emergency services – because of the location, time or nature of the work being done.
- > **Out of hours callout:** means a request for attendance of a health practitioner between 5:00pm and 8:00am, or anytime on a Saturday, Sunday, or public holiday.
- > **Remote area:** means a region where Gayle's Law will apply to any out of hours callout or unscheduled callout if it is within the part of South Australia that covers:
  - An area not covered by a local council under the *Local Government Act 1999*
  - The lands within the meaning of the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunyatjara Land Rights Act 1981*
  - The lands within the meaning of the *Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act 1984*
  - The area of the District Council of Cooper Pedy, and
  - The area of the Municipal Council of Roxby Downs.
- > **Remote work:** work that may involve activities undertaken at a location removed from a metropolitan environment and/or are few people present where communications and travel are difficult.

- > **Second responder:** means a trusted community member who will accompany a health practitioner who is providing an out of hours or unscheduled callout. This can include a person from the local community, another worker of a health service, or another Government worker.
- > **State-wide services:** means State-wide Clinical Support Services, Prison Health, SA Dental Service, BreastScreen SA and any other state-wide services that fall under the governance of the Local Health Networks.
- > **Unscheduled callout:** means a request for the attendance of a health practitioner within 24 hours in a remote area.
- > **WHS Defined Officer:** means a person who makes or helps make a decision which affects either the whole or a major part of a business or undertaking. If a person has the capacity to significantly affect the financial standing of the organisation, they are recognised as an 'officer' under the WHS Act. You are considered to be an officer as per:
  - o the meaning of section 9 of the [Corporations Act 2001](#) (external site)
  - o the Crown within the meaning of section 247 of the WHS Act
  - o a public authority within the meaning of section 252 of the WHS Act.

At SA Health, these persons are commonly referred to as 'WHS Defined Officers', and includes roles such as - Chief Executives, Deputy Chief Executives, and Executive Directors, etc.

- > **Worker:** means person who carries out work for SA Health and its agencies regardless of whether they are full-time, part-time or casual. This can be an:
  - o employee
  - o contractor or subcontractor, or an employee thereof
  - o outworker, such as a contractor or worker who is engaged to work from their home or at a place that would not previously have been thought of as a business premise
  - o student in placement
  - o apprentice or trainee
  - o school-based work experience student
  - o labour hire worker
  - o volunteer.

## 9. Compliance

This policy is binding on those to whom it applies or relates. Implementation at a local level may be subject to audit/assessment. The Domain Custodian must work towards the establishment of systems which demonstrate compliance with this policy, in accordance with the requirements of the [Risk Management, Internal Audit and Integrated Compliance Policy](#).

Any instance of non-compliance with this policy must be reported to the Domain Custodian for the Employment, Work Health and Safety Policy Domain and the Domain Custodian for the Risk, Compliance and Audit Policy Domain.

## 10. Document ownership

Policy owner: Domain Custodian for the Employment, Work Health and Safety Policy Domain

Title: Remote or Isolated Work Policy

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## 11. Document history

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Amendment notes
1.0	26/09/2014	Portfolio Executive, SA Health	Original PE approved version.
2.0	17/04/2020	Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate & System Support Services	Formally reviewed in line with 4 year scheduled timeline for review. Amended Roles and Responsibilities to include LHN Governing Boards. Amended to include risk management framework. Amended to include reference to <i>Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (SA) (Remote Area Attendance) Amendment Act 2017 ('Gayle's Law')</i>
3.0	19/12/2024	Chief Executive, DHW	Updated to new policy framework requirements and template, removed references to third party directives, and incorporated updated information as part of the SA Health WHSIM refresh.

## 12. Appendices

1. [Remote or Isolated Work Mandatory Instruction](#)

## Appendix 1: Remote or Isolated Work Mandatory Instruction

The following Instruction must be complied with to meet the requirements of this policy. For further information refer to the Remote or Isolated Work Guideline and supporting documents.

### 1. WHS Defined Officers must:

- 1.1 Ensure the effective implementation of the operational aspects for remote or isolated work and the requirements of the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(South Australia\) 2017](#), including the provision of financial and physical resources embedded into safe systems of work that incorporate contingencies for check-in, escalation and communication.
- 1.2 Evaluate the effectiveness of existing risk controls, strategies and treatments associated with remote or isolated work on a regular basis.
- 1.3 Ensure a pool of suitable second responders (who meet specified requirements) are available to be contacted as required for health practitioner workers providing health services in a remote area for out of hours or unscheduled callouts.
- 1.4 Ensure appropriate security measures are in place to ensure the safety of workers, particularly after-hours and that workers are aware of how to use/access these measures to minimise risks associated with remote or isolated work.

### 2. Managers must:

- 2.1 Identify workers who work in remote or isolated environments including:
  - a) Working in isolation or on site (e.g., consults after hours or on-call or in a room where the door is closed, maintenance and/or cleaning work).
  - b) Working in isolation or remotely off site (e.g., out of hours or unscheduled callout, home visits, community work, working from home, or cleaning).
  - c) Working from a vehicle (e.g., paramedics, nursing staff, personal carers, field workers).
- 2.2 Ensure that prior to workers undertaking remote or isolated work:
  - a) An appropriate risk assessment (e.g.: using the tools provided) is completed in consultation with workers, review and assess existing Safe Work Procedures, and or develop a Remote or Isolated Travel Plan as required
  - b) Consult workers and other relevant sources to assess the safety of the work location and activity, and
  - c) Ensure identified required training is completed.
- 2.3 Not direct workers to perform a service where a risk assessment determines it to be unsafe or unacceptable to perform the service.
- 2.4 Communicate to health practitioner workers the established pool of suitable second responders where an out of hours or unscheduled callout is required.
- 2.5 Provide workers with adequate communication systems, equipment, and resources, including applicable information and training on the risks of remote or isolated work, understanding relevant workplace procedures, cultural awareness, and the appropriate use of equipment so to perform remote or isolated work safely.
- 2.6 Approve and authorise all remote or isolated work activities prior to commencement and only once identified risks have appropriate controls in place to ensure a safe work environment.
- 2.7 Regularly review and assess local remote or isolated work processes, plans, communication systems or equipment in consultation with workers to ensure ongoing effectiveness and suitability.
- 2.8 Ensure remote or isolated work hazards, risks and/or incidents are appropriately reported and investigated within a reasonable timeframe, and additional or appropriate controls are applied.
- 2.9 Provide workers any debriefing, counselling, or support services as required.

### 3. All workers must:

- 3.1 Follow established safe work procedures, approved travel and or contingency plans, including escalation protocols, security and communication processes related to remote or isolated work.