| Policy | **PIRSA** |
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**HR P 005**

Keeping in touch policy

PIRSA is committed to giving employees the opportunity to keep in touch with the workplace while on prolonged periods of leave without pay. This assists employees to remain up to date with workplace news and changes, maintain their connections with the workplace and help their transition back to work.

This policy is one of PIRSA’s suite of People and Culture policies, procedures and guidelines that commit PIRSA to the ongoing pursuit of family friendly employment.

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| Document Control | | | | | |
| **PPGS Owner Workgroup:** | People and Culture | **PPGS Owner:** | Director, People and Culture | **PPGS Risk Rating**  **& Review Cycle:** | Low  3 years |
| **PPGS Contact Name:** | Bruen Holman-Bates | **PPGS Approver:** | Director, People and Culture | **Objective File & Document No.:** | CORP F2009/001022  A3435025 |
| **PPGS Contact Title:** | Director, People and Culture | **Date Approved:** | 16 December 2020 | **Status:** | Approved |
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| **REVISION RECORD** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Version** | **Revision description** |
| 22/09/2009 | 1.0 | Policy approved by the PIRSA Chief Executive. |
| 27/11/2014 | 2.0 | Minor amendments to policy approved by the Director, People Governance and Assets. |
| 19/12/2017 | 3.0 | Minor amendments to the policy approved by the General Manager, People and Culture. |
| 11/11/2020 | 4.0 | Template update, minor amendments not impacting intent of policy approved by Director, People and Culture. |

| **RISK ASSESSMENT** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Risk Rating** | **Risk Assessment Evaluation** |
| 11/11/2020 | Low | Assessment of PPGS indicates that should this policy not exist or should it not be complied with the resulting impact to PIRSA people would be minor.  There exists a risk of non utilisation of Keeping in touch practices and non-participation, or incorrect application of KIT work. This could result in reduced employee connection to work whilst on unpaid leave, and more challenging return to work following leave. 3-year review cycle is appropriate to ensure any updates to legislation or Government Policy are adapted to. |

# Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide options for employees to keep in touch with the workplace while on leave and the protocols to follow for an employee’s participation in Keeping in Touch (KIT) work.

# Scope

This policy applies to all PIRSA employees who are on prolonged periods of leave without pay.

# Policy Details

PIRSA is committed to giving employees the opportunity to keep in touch with the workplace while on prolonged periods of leave without pay to ensure that the employee:

* has a smooth transition back into the workplace
* refreshes their skills
* becomes familiar with new or updated processes
* can be involved in forward planning discussions or meetings that may affect their role.

## Contact During Leave

Managers and employees have a shared responsibility to communicate information that will impact on an employee’s employment with PIRSA whilst on leave. Other information may also be conveyed if an employee expresses a wish for this to occur.

### Essential communication during leave

In accordance with Commissioner for Public Sector Employment [Determination 3.1: Employment Conditions – Hours of Work, Overtime and Leave](https://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/hr-and-policy-support/Determinations,-Premiers-Directions-and-Guidelines/Determinations/Source/Determination-3.1-November-2019-1.pdf), the manager and employee have responsibilities to communicate certain information to each other.

These include:

* **Manager’s responsibility**: the manager must contact an employee who is on prolonged leave (e.g. parental leave, long service leave, unpaid leave) where a review and/or change in the workplace is to occur which may have a significant impact on the status or responsibility level of the role that the employee held before commencing leave.
* **Employee’s responsibility**: whilst on prolonged leave, an employee must notify the manager of any changes of address or other contact details.

### Other relevant information

By mutual agreement between the manager and the employee, other information that may be communicated whilst the employee is on prolonged leave may include:

* PIRSA news and publications
* branch meeting minutes and team/office updates
* learning and development opportunities
* new policies, procedures, guidelines and initiatives that may be relevant to the employee
* invitations to participate in employee surveys
* social functions organised by the work team
* health and wellbeing activities such as flu vaccinations
* internally advertised role vacancies or similar opportunities.

### Ways to keep in touch

The employee and the manager should mutually agree on the appropriate means of communicating during the employee’s period of leave. Some ways to keep in touch include:

* The employee periodically checking in with the manager or a colleague (or vice versa) by phone, email, online meetings or face-to-face meetings.
* The employee periodically checking PIRSA’s [Internet website](http://pir.sa.gov.au/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/SA_PIRSA), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyicJZzw2RKEBYrfp0p1IDw) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/primary-industries-and-regions-sa/) accounts and profiles for alerts, news, events and other information.
* Accessing work emails over the Internet (e.g. from home) by setting up Outlook Web Access (OWA). Note: The employee is responsible for OWA associated costs such as an Internet connection or mobile phone data plan, and any impact of OWA access activity has on their home internet or mobile phone data plan.

Refer to the [PIRSA Internet and Email Use Policy IM P 005](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A190844/document/versions/published) for requirements and further information.

* If the employee has access to work emails, then periodically checking PIRSA CE (Chief Executive) Updates, Bulletins and News Weekly e-newsletters and other communications for updated information.
* The manager or a colleague forwarding relevant emails containing ‘public’ or unclassified ‘for official use only’ security classified information to the employee’s personal email account.

## Keeping in touch (KIT) work

The employee may wish to participate in ‘Keeping in Touch’ (KIT) work while on leave without pay under the following conditions:

* No employee is required to work while on leave, and managers are not to require an employee to engage in work while the employee is on approved leave.
* KIT work may only take place by prior mutual agreement between the employee and the manager. An employee does not have a right to KIT work if the manager does not agree it is appropriate.
* Where it is agreed for an employee to engage in KIT work, the number of occasions that this can occur should not exceed ten (10) occasions, and the total time for KIT work accrued must not exceed 30 hours.
* KIT work can be undertaken, with agreement from both the manager and employee:
* as a part day
* 1 day at a time (full day)
* a few days at a time, or
* all at once.
* KIT work is to be credited to the employee’s banked flexitime balance. The banked flexitime is to reflect the actual time spent on KIT work.
* This banked flexitime must be used within the first three months of the employee’s return to work. The employee may choose to use this flexitime as a way of gradually building up hours at work, to assist in the transition back to the workplace. The employee may use up to one day (7.5 hours) of flexitime per week during this period.
* KIT work may not be undertaken during a period of paid leave, such as paid maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave, long service leave or recreation leave.
* KIT work may not extend the total duration of any leave period.

### Eligibility for KIT work

For an employee to be considered eligible for KIT work, they should meet the following criteria:

* The KIT work that the employee will undertake must be mutually agreed, and clearly defined by the manager and the employee prior to commencing such work.
* KIT work may only be undertaken where it contributes to the professional development of the employee.
* The types of activities that can be defined as KIT work can include:
* participating in work-related training or awareness sessions.
* attending conferences or seminars relevant to work.
* participating in work team planning days.
* The types of activities that may not be defined as KIT work include:
* attending social functions such as Christmas lunches.
* making a social visit to the workplace.
* reading and/or responding to emails and other information such as that described in section 3.1.2, which have been provided or accessed simply for the purposes of staying informed of workplace news and events.

### KIT work application form, timesheet, and use plan

The PIRSA KIT work related forms are required to be submitted by employees and approved by managers where relevant:

* [PIRSA Application to Participate in Keeping in Touch (KIT) Work Form](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A883229/document/versions/published) – for employees to seek their manager’s prior approval to participate in KIT work whilst on a prolonged period of leave without pay.
* [PIRSA Timesheet for the Approval of Keeping in Touch (KIT) Work Form](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A883237/document/versions/published) – for employees to monitor and seek their manager’s approval of KIT time accrued whilst on a prolonged period of leave without pay.
* [PIRSA Plan to Exhaust Keeping in Touch (KIT) Work Time Form](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A883234/document/versions/published) – for employees to plan the taking of approved KIT work time from their banked flexitime balance within three months of their return to work.

## Preparing to return to work

Prior to returning to work, the employee and the manager should discuss how the workplace can best accommodate any new circumstances of the employee. This may include flexible workplace arrangements that help employees balance their preferred participation in the workforce with their personal responsibilities, while still meeting the business operational needs of the organisation.

More information on PIRSA’s flexible work arrangements is available from the [PIRSA Working Arrangement Policy HR P 025](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A1805672/document/versions/published) and associated guidelines and procedures.

### Induction on return to work

When an employee completes a prolonged period of leave and returns to work, the manager is responsible for ensuring the employee is provided an induction regarding any relevant workplace changes and requirements that the employee should be made aware of.

# Roles and Responsibilities

| **Role** | **Responsibilities** |
| --- | --- |
| Chief Executive | * Approving the policy. |
| PIRSA Executives | * Implementing the policy (including communication, awareness and training) * Supporting employees to keep in touch with the workplace while on prolonged periods of leave without pay. |
| Managers | * Complying with the policy. * Mutually agreeing with an employee who is on prolonged leave without pay (e.g. parental leave, long service leave) on the appropriate means of communicating during the employee’s period of leave. * Contacting an employee who is on prolonged leave without pay (e.g. parental leave, long service leave) where a review and/or change in the workplace is to occur which may have a significant impact on the status or responsibility level of the role that the employee held before commencing leave. |
| Director, People and Culture | * Providing policy advice and assistance, including interpreting policy requirements. * Ongoing management of the policy (including feedback, review, document and records management requirements, updating policy versions and removal of revoked policies). * Evaluating, monitoring and reviewing the policy. |
| Employees | * Complying with the policy and performing any policy actions or steps. * Notifying their manager of any changes of address or other contact details whilst on prolonged leave. * Familiarising themselves and complying with the policy and supporting information. |

# Definitions

| **Term** | **Meaning** |
| --- | --- |
| KIT | Keeping in Touch work. |
| OWA | Outlook Web Access. It is an extra email service that, subject to the relevant manager’s approval, provides secure access to PIRSA employee work emails over the Internet and from anywhere in the world. Prior to first using the service the employee will need to setup an OWA service subscription through the PIRSA ICT Helpdesk. |
| PIRSA | Department of Primary Industries and Regions. |

# Related Documents

* [*PIRSA Application to Participate in Keeping in Touch (KIT) Work Form*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A883229/document/versions/published)
* [*PIRSA Timesheet for the Approval of Keeping in Touch (KIT) Work Form*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A883237/document/versions/published)
* [*PIRSA Plan to Exhaust Keeping in Touch (KIT) Work Time Form*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A883234/document/versions/published)
* [*PIRSA Working Arrangements Policy HR P 025*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A1805672/document/versions/published) *and associated guidelines and procedures*
* [*PIRSA Leave Procedure HR R 008*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A1413479/document/versions/published)
* [*PIRSA Internet and Email Use Policy IM P 005*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A190844/document/versions/published)
* [*PIRSA Outlook Web Access (OWA) Instructions and Information*](https://objectivesag.pirsa.sa.gov.au/id:A1554875/document/versions/published)
* [*Commissioner for Public Sector Employment Determination 3.1: Employment Conditions - Hours of Work, Overtime and Leave*](https://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/hr-and-policy-support/Determinations,-Premiers-Directions-and-Guidelines/Determinations/Source/Determination-3.1-November-2019-1.pdf)
* [*Fair Work Act 2009*](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00323)
* *PIRSA’s* [*Internet website*](http://pir.sa.gov.au/)*,* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/SA_PIRSA)*,* [*YouTube*](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyicJZzw2RKEBYrfp0p1IDw) *and* [*LinkedIn*](https://www.linkedin.com/company/primary-industries-and-regions-sa/) *accounts and profiles*