Wellbeing Webinar: Insights and Key Take-aways

The following areas capture how the panel responded to prompts and questions in the wellbeing webinar.

For the purposes of this report, remote work refers to working away from an office and team. Relatedly, remote worker refers to an employee who is working away from an office and their team.

A key insight is that benefits are more likely to be realised when remote work is:

- Voluntary, employees have a choice to work remotely.
- Suitable, an appropriate means to perform the core tasks of the job.
- Planned, steps taken to implement (workspace and capability).
- Maintained, mindfully and sustainably managed to reduce unfair experiences.

Questions	Panel Thoughts
What is the data telling us?	☐ Across industries, feedback from our wellbeing survey found that people who worked from home during the COVID-19 period reported higher energy levels, lower stress levels and worried less ☐ The main stressor was the mental workload, NOT uncertainty ☐ These trends were stable throughout COVID-19 period. However, we don't have pre-COVID data to compare it to. ☐ Key insight is that people would benefit from more task-feedback as much feedback on task is being delivered at a group level. ☐ Although data being published through COVID shares overwhelming support for working remotely, it's not a one-size-fits all solution.
What changes are being seen from a HR perspective?	☐ Ultimately it has been quite stable. To date, the number of poor behaviours, allegations and conflict we are seeing is essentially unchanged from what we have been seeing for the last 15 years. ☐ However, the ways in which these behaviours are being displayed are different, given the remote work situation. ☐ The numbers of behaviour issues, allegations and conflicts are a lag indicator so it may be a few months until we see the impact from the COVID-19 period. ☐ Important to remember that as the transition to remote work has come from an external source, the data collected in this period may not reflect the trends that will emerge for remote work post-COVID-19.
What does the research say will	☐ For a long time many people have wanted the flexibility to work remotely. The current pandemic has push through a lot of the pre-existing barriers,

make remote work effective?	but has meant that in many instances the transition was not a planned process.
	☐ In order to achieve the predicted benefits of remote work, there needs to be:
	○ **An element of choice**: Choice leads to more satisfaction and engagement
	○ **Role and person must be suited for remote work**: Some roles will not be appropriate for remote work for a variety of reasons as will behaviours or performance of our people.
	○ **Pragmatic consideration of resources**: Forward planning to determine what is actually required to deliver work remotely
	○ **Systems and procedures**: Systems must be in place to ensure that workflow can be managed and the employee is not excluded from the team
	☐ There is now very visible evidence that a lot of work can be done remotely.
What is the risk of having employee's work remotely?	☐ Telstra decision gained a prominence 10 years ago (individual injured shoulder while they were going to get cough mixture and again when going to the front door to lock it at the employer's direction)
	☐ Duty of care extends to where people are working remotely
	☐ There is a heightened sense of risk as there is so little control or passive surveillance of the work environment when employees are working remotely
	☐ The employee not taking steps to make things safe at home doesn't prevent it from being compensable
	☐ However, there are risks at work as well. We take steps to identify and mitigate the risk to acceptable levels. The same logic should be applied to working from home.
How do we decide who gets to work remotely?	☐ Consider the requirements of the position and the operational needs of the work place. The COVID-19 period has tested a lot of the assumptions and prejudices around the requirements and operational needs.
	☐ Given the experience gained during this period, we should have more accurate insight into the actual requirements of the position and the operational needs of the workplace.
	☐ Pre-COVID, decisions may have been based on the level of trust a manager had in an employee
	☐ Need to clearly define and communicate how remote work arrangements will be determined.

	☐ Define a set of objective criteria that will determine whether the requirements of the position and the operational needs of the workplace will permit remote work for the role. ☐ These criteria must be objective and transparent. Adjust the criteria as we learn.
What impact does the perception of fairness have in employee responses to remote work decisions?	☐ Without an objective and transparent criteria, there is likely to be allegations of preferential treatment for the employees who are permitted to work remotely. ☐ Feedback from clients indicates they want to work remotely 2-3days per week. Most organisations are now transitioning to a hybrid model of office and remote work time. ☐ Issues of fairness in terms of access to leaders and being involved decision making can arise with hybrid models ☐ Adopting system and process solutions can help to retain involvement of those who are working remotely (e.g. making the person working remotely facilitate the team meeting to ensure they are involved) ☐ Just because some one thinks it isn't fair, doesn't make it so. Leaders should be proactively having conversations with employees to actively manage situations of perceived unfairness.
What are the questions we would be asking our clients to determine if remote work was a good idea?	☐ Is the role viable for remote work? ☐ Do you have a defined criteria for which role can work remotely? ☐ Do you have systems and processes in place to support remote work? ☐ What resources are available to those working remotely? ☐ What processes do you have in place to identity and mitigate potential risk at the remote work site?
What should we be doing to make remote work an effective option?	☐ Keep investing in your leaders. Ensure that they have the skills to lead in this situation. At the moment there is a lack of investment in leader training, right when they need the most support to deal with a novel situation. ☐ Ensure leaders have the ability, confidence and supporting structure to have transparent and proactive conversations around remote work decisions and fairness issues. ☐ Ensure that leaders are communicating the current KPIs and expectations of remote work arrangements.
What influence should an	☐ Remote work is a privilege not a right. ☐ In the past, work from home has been based on trust that an employee will

employee's performance have in deciding if they can work remotely?	perform in the remote work environment.
	☐ The challenge with using trust is that it is a private and subjective assessment on the part of the manager.
	☐ Performance can influence the decision to allow someone to work from home, but this decision should not come as a surprise to the employee.
	☐ The employee and leader should be engaged in the formalised performance management procedures prior to the decision regarding remote work for it to be considered.
	☐ You can make the formalised performance management processes part of the objective criteria as to whether remote work is permitted.
How do we effectively manage performance remotely?	☐ While the focus is generally on low performance, it is really important to consider what high performers require in the remote work environment.
	☐ Really need to consider and communicate what the KPIs will be. Engaging in the same sorts of discussion we would expect in the office.
	☐ Physical presence is generally a very poor measure of productivity; however people tend to consider it because it is easy to measure.
	☐ Based on the data gathered in the Wellbeing Survey, the best thing a leader can do is provide individual feedback on how someone is performing in their role.
	☐ If you don't like someone as much, you are less likely to check in with them and have performance conversations.
	☐ Ensure your leaders are scheduling individual check-ins with all their direct reports and providing performance feedback
	☐ Digital literacy skills in both managers and employees are critical for ensuring people stay connected. This has a big impact on team culture.
	☐ Empowering employees to speak up if their needs are not being met in the remote work environment to avoid disengagement.