StrategicHR AUSTRALIA

Return-to-Office Readiness Checklist

Before mandating staff back to the office, use this checklist to make sure your approach is compliant, fair, and practical.

1. **Review contracts and awards**
   Check whether existing contracts, enterprise agreements, or awards allow you to direct staff back on-site. Confirm what is lawful and reasonable before you announce anything.

2. **Define your business rationale**
   Be clear on *why* the business needs people in the office — collaboration, client service, productivity, culture, compliance. Put it in writing and share it.

3. **Choose your model**
   Decide what's required: fixed days (e.g., Tue/Wed/Thu), minimum office days (e.g., 3 per week), or role-based attendance (client-facing vs. back-office).

4. **Consult with staff**
   Survey employees, run a Q&A, and invite feedback. It shows respect and may uncover practical adjustments you hadn't considered.

5. **Plan a phased rollout**
   Move gradually: start with one day, then step up to two or three over several months. Monitor each phase before moving to the next.

6. **Update policies and procedures**
   Document the changes in your HR policies. Include how flexible work requests will be managed and how exceptions will be considered.

7. **Prepare leaders and managers**
   Give managers clear talking points, FAQs, and training so they can support staff, handle objections, and model the new expectations.

8. **Support employee wellbeing**
   Offer practical support — commuting allowances, adjusted start times, mental health resources, or EAP access. Show you care about the impact on daily lives.

9. **Measure the impact**
   Track key indicators: engagement, turnover, absenteeism, productivity, and client outcomes. Compare results before and after your return-to-office rollout.

10. **Address issues fairly**
    Handle resistance with understanding first. Explore individual circumstances, make reasonable adjustments, and only escalate to formal steps when necessary.