



The Covid Diaries: Day 8 - Travel Edition

Our intrepid Covid-19 blogger, Darren Isaacs, picks up his blog where he left off as he sets off for 14 days of forced quarantine to visit his family in Australia. In this limited run of Covid Diaries, Travel Edition, he will share some of his travel and quarantine experiences alongside his musings on topical HR issues our clients are facing.

9 to 5

In my Australian lockdown hotel, I have been reading local newspaper articles about how the world of work is changing forever, with workers no longer always expecting to be tied to an office location Monday-Friday. It isn't novel and reflects what commentators from the UK and US have also been saying, for months on end. We are, we are told, at a turning point.

That zeitgeist hasn't been embraced by everyone and every business, but certainly by many. So much so that "homeworking" and "hybrid working" would have a good run at being the buzzwords of 2021.

To put my cards on the table: I am fully supportive of working flexibility. I think it is a great thing. I am not "anti" office work as such (maybe a little bit right now but I will get over it soon), but I am definitely "pro" a flexible working model if it makes sense to the business and the employee.

I can think of many supporting arguments, a very important one being that it will hopefully open up more opportunities - especially "City" opportunities - to worker demographics who would otherwise struggle to commit to travel and an office-based role for 48 hours a week. As many of you will know, I am very much of the view that workplace diversity is a good thing, not just for economic or social reasons but simply because it is. It is an inherently good thing. Flexible working structures will aid the cause.

Before any of you email me, I am also aware that there are downsides to flexible working. One of the most important of these is the unintended impact on the local community. Local businesses near offices - coffeeshops, retail, smaller supermarket outlets - are still struggling due to lack of footfall. I wish I could fix this. I am just an employment lawyer so I don't have all the answers. I tend to focus on people issues. But I do think we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater (and go back to 100% permanent office-based working).



We are hoping to move offices ourselves at the end of this year. In the past 12-24 months or so we have grown dramatically and now find ourselves bursting at the seams somewhat. At least we would be, had the pandemic not intervened and sent us all packing. It's not that we can't work flexibly ourselves and are clinging to an office-based model – for the past 10 years we have had what would now be referred to as a “hybrid working” policy. We have been ahead of the game. It has served us well. However, even with such flexibility there comes a point in the growth cycle where we just won't be able to sustain our numbers in the current space we occupy.

Our new office will, hopefully, be a larger and much more “collaborative” space. I think that is just architect shorthand for open-plan, scandi furniture, lots of plants, wood accents, trendy lighting, and so forth. The plans look amazing. We will probably have to draw the line at table football or bean bags (we are still lawyers at the end of the day) but I am looking forward to welcoming our team back properly into the lovely new digs.

It might even inspire one of our whizzy team members to create some sort of app thingy that will bank us millions and mean we can all retire (here I go again). Wouldn't that be nice?

If you would like to read more Covid diary entires please click [here](#).