

Media release

Business continuity planning essential for swine flu recovery

Risk Management Institution of Australasia Ltd Western Australian president Marg Hemsley says business continuity planning is essential for organisations to weather the ramifications of a swine flu epidemic.

“Organisations must focus on protecting their workers and implement business continuity planning to ensure critical functions and services are maintained,” she said.

Ms Hemsley, a risk management consultant, was involved in Western Australia’s planning for a potential “bird flu” epidemic. She said Australian organisations were well placed to respond to a swine flu epidemic, but had to ensure they were not complacent.

“In discussing the bird flu epidemic, many businesses thought they would not be affected because they didn’t deal with birds. There is a risk of the same attitude.”

She warned organisations to consider the ramifications of having insufficient workers. The cause may not necessarily be infected workers, but those affected through social distancing, for example, the potential closure of child care centres.

Organisations in service industries, which relied on human resources, would be impacted more heavily. “What impact would major absenteeism have on your business,” she said. “What about staff shortages at suppliers or customers’ premises?”

It was important for organisations to focus on “facts not hysteria”. The media and health departments had a role to play in informing organisations of appropriate responses.

The Federal Government’s quick move to implement airport screening for international passengers showed robust risk management plans were in place and able to be implemented quickly, Ms Hemsley said.

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