

# COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Queensland Health & HHS Members

## — March 17, 2020

### **What is the Queensland Health central message to staff?**

Queensland Health has a consistent message coming from the DG and Department of Health Chief Human Resource Officer that the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and of Queensland Health Staff is their first priority. They want to maximise safety and minimise risk.

### **Leave Entitlements**

This is the link for the updated Employment Arrangements in the Event of a Health Pandemic Directive 01/20 <https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/documents/directive/0120/employment-arrangements-event-health-pandemic>

### **What is Special Pandemic Leave?**

Special Pandemic Leave is a maximum 20 days paid leave for use when the employee is unable to attend work and unable to perform work under flexible/remote working arrangements because they:

- have an actual viral infection and have exhausted their sick leave accruals; and/or
- are required to care for immediate family or household member/s who have an actual or suspected viral infection and have exhausted their sick leave accruals; and/or
- are required to care for children as a result of school or childcare centres closures and have exhausted their sick leave accruals.

### **Are Casual Staff able to access Special Pandemic Leave?**

A chief executive at their discretion may grant up to a maximum 20 days paid Special Pandemic Leave to a casual employee.

### **What do I do when the Special Pandemic leave runs out?**

Once Special Pandemic Leave is exhausted, employees will be expected to access their existing recreation leave then their long service leave entitlements. Where an employee seeks to access accrued long service leave in accordance with this directive, the minimum continuous service period of seven years and minimum period of leave to be taken at any one time prescribed

in the Ministerial Directive on Long Service Leave shall not apply. That is, if you have any long service leave accrued, but you haven't worked in QH for 7 years, that isn't a barrier, you can access your long service leave straight away.

### **Will I get paid if I am told not to come to work during the declared Pandemic period?**

Queensland Health employees will be paid their regular remuneration (which includes projected shift roster penalty rates) if they are willing and able to attend work but are directed by their employer not to attend work.

### **Will I get paid if I can't get to work due to public transport closures or cancellations?**

Where employees are unable to attend work because they are reliant on public transport and services are suspended or cancelled the Ministerial Directive about special leave will apply. We understand that you will be paid. Depending on your work you may also be asked to work remotely or telecommute.

### **I am undertaking a volunteer role in the community that relates to COVID 19**

Where employees are absent from work because they are fulfilling volunteer roles in the community related to the health pandemic (e.g. assisting in a hospital or an aged care facility), and that absence is authorised by the employer, such absence is deemed to be included under the leave type "attendance at emergencies" prescribed at Schedule Two or "Declared emergency situation or state disaster" as prescribed in Schedule One of the Ministerial Directive on Special Leave.

### **What documentation do I need to provide my employer to access Special Pandemic leave?**

Supporting documentation will be required for all periods of absence on paid Special Pandemic Leave. Where employees access paid Special Pandemic Leave as a result of illness, or need to care for ill family or household members, they may not be required to provide a medical certificate; they may instead provide a copy of a record to confirm they (or their family member) have undergone a relevant assessment or such other documentation or advice which satisfies agency requirements.

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**.....  
Cancellation of annual leave.....**

There should not be a blanket cancellation of Annual Leave in place at DoH or HHS's. There will be occasions that your employer may seek volunteers and ask people if they are willing to cancel their leave.

**.....  
What happens if my place of work is closed?.....**

Where an agency closes down a workplace due to health and safety issues and/or unavailability of sufficient staff, any employees who normally attend work at that workplace shall either be directed to attend work at a reasonable alternative workplace, undertake flexible work arrangements or be directed not to attend any workplace due to not being required.

Where directed not to attend work at all employees are to be paid regular remuneration without debit to any leave account

**.....  
I am being asked to temporarily work in an alternate workplace.....**

In the first instance there should be consultation with members if you are to be moved for a temporary period from your usual workplace. The consultation would need to take into consideration your individual circumstances.

If you are being asked to work in a different workplace Queensland Health has said centrally that they do not want staff out of pocket and will look at reimbursement for travel and time. HR Policy D2 and Directive 09/11-Domestic Travelling and Relieving Expenses are applicable in this situation.

**.....  
I am being asked to undertake alternate duties temporarily.....**

In the first instance there should be consultation with members if you are to be moved for a temporary period from your usual workplace. The consultation would need to take into consideration your individual circumstances. You should have adequate training, skill, knowledge and equipment including PPE to undertake this alternate work.

It has been agreed by Queensland Health that the employer should always seek volunteers for alternate work in the first instance such as the setting up of Fever Clinics.

**.....  
Can I access EAP?.....**

Together has raised increased availability or access to EAP with Queensland Health. Queensland Health is actively seeking to ensure that more companies that offer EAP are made available to staff.

**.....  
Am I able to Telecommute?.....**

Employers should be encouraging and allowing telecommuting where this is appropriate and you cannot attend work because: you are required to self

isolate; your workplace is closed; you have caring responsibilities; or you cannot get to work due to quarantine/public transport shutdown.

If you are having difficulties accessing this, then call the union office for assistance on 1800 177 244.

**.....  
Will HHS's still have to continue to consult about change management, industrial provisions and COVID 19?.....**

All HHS's have stood up their emergency response team, Queensland Health has told the HHS management that they need to continue to engage with unions directly and through the consultative forums. There will continue to be a top down commitment for consultation which will continue to include regular briefings for delegates and organisers.

Centrally we will continue to meet with Queensland Health on a weekly basis and send out more Question and Answer Fact Sheets as we get more answers to our questions.

Most HHS's are also continuing to have weekly briefings for union delegates with senior management about the evolving issues.

**.....  
What is being put in place to prevent fatigue?.....**

All the industrial provisions will still apply, and staff will need to be supported to not work and take appropriate breaks if fatigued. Queensland Health is developing further documentation that will be supplied to unions.

**.....  
Will our Enterprise Bargaining agreements still be progressed?.....**

Drafting is continuing between Together representatives, other Unions and Queensland Health, who continue to meet regularly. Once drafting is completed it can proceed to an all staff vote which will be held electronically.

The agreements can then be certified in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. We do not have a confirmed date for the payment of the \$1250 for Queensland Health staff. We are continuing to raise this with government. We are hoping that a final draft will be ready soon and that this process can happen as quickly as possible. Once we have further information and a final draft, we will let members know.

**.....  
What should I do if I have issues with accessing leave provisions or am being directed to work in alternate work or workplace?.....**

Together members should contact their local organiser or email [health@together.org.au](mailto:health@together.org.au) or call your Together Union Office on 1800 177 244