

COVID-19 and its effect on your workplace conditions

The PSA/CPSU NSW has been negotiating a range of benefits for workers effected by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The following describes conditions for people working in different sectors.

NSW Public Sector and State-Owned Corporations

The NSW Government has released a [Premier's Circular](#) that establishes a number of key provisions to help manage the current COVID-19 pandemic at work.

The circular includes the following provisions:

- Paid special leave of up to 20 days for people who need to be excluded from workplace/placed in quarantine
- Paid special leave of up to 20 days for people with caring responsibilities or who have transport disruptions (without needing to exhaust other forms of leave first)
- Paid special leave if the workplace is closed
- For people who are sick – they apply for sick leave as usual, if they exhaust sick leave they can apply for special leave
- Provision to work flexibly/remotely/at other locations where at all possible.

We are still attempting to resolve issues regarding casual workers, who are placed in a difficult position if required to work but unwell, and the union is particularly concerned with “frontline casual workers” who may not be able to work from home.

This circular should set the minimum standard for workers in the federal system, as described below.

University sector

The university sector has been particularly affected by the impact COVID-19 virus, with both revenue being affected and campuses closed. On 11 March 2019 both the Gold Coast and Lismore campuses of Southern Cross University closed due to COVID-19 concerns. The CPSU NSW was able to gain confirmation from the university that that all staff scheduled to work during this closure, including casuals, are to be paid for their rostered hours. Macquarie University has also agreed to pay casuals in the event of a close down. CPSU NSW officials have been consulting with other university administration and have been establishing supportive framework for university workers during this pandemic including for casual employees. The union’s industrial representatives will continue to consult with universities to maintain safety and support workers’ conditions.

TAFE NSW

The above Premier’s Circular also applies to TAFE NSW. The CPSU NSW will continue to consult with TAFE NSW to ensure the health and safety of our members.

Disability, utilities, private prisons and other federal system employees

These sectors are not immune from COVID-19 and are considered significant at- risk industries due to the nature of their clients and the essential services they deliver. The above circular should form the standard for supporting workers’ safety and industrial conditions via consultations that the union has commenced with your employer.



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Work health and safety

As a declared pandemic, this is a health and safety issue for many workers. The PSA/CPSU NSW is meeting with your employer regularly to consult on establishing workplace safety controls that will assist you manage pandemic influenza safety at work. We will continue to do this and workers are encouraged to do this locally with management through the mechanisms available under the *Work Health and Safety Act*. Prevention is of course preferable, so reducing or eliminating close contact with public (and co-workers) is a recommended mechanism, as well as systematic cleaning of surfaces.

The World Health Organisation has also published advice on how to get your workplace ready for COVID-19.

It includes tips such as:

- Making sure workplaces are CLEAN AND HYGIENIC
- Promoting regular, thorough HAND-WASHING by employees, contractors and customers
- Promoting GOOD RESPIRATORY HYGIENE in the workplace
- Advising people to CONSULT TRAVEL ADVISORIES before business trips
- For places where COVID-19 is spreading in the community, asking people to STAY HOME FROM WORK if they have symptoms, even if they're just a MILD COUGH, LOW-GRADE FEVER (37.3 degrees Celsius or more) or if they have taken medicines such as paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin, because these can mask symptoms.

“Employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate,” the document says.

If you are concerned that workplace prevention, travel warnings and isolation measures are not being adhered to please contact your employer. In the event that your employer does not act, contact your union to progress.

Read more [HERE](#).

Visit [NSW Health](#) for latest updates.

Respect at work

During times such as these, it is important to maintain respectful relations with colleagues. Please keep informed about the pandemic's developments and please do not panic. Our members in the Ministry of Health are informed and competent and are working to keep NSW safe and healthy.

Your union will continue to support members through this pandemic. If you are aware of colleagues are not yet members ask them to [JOIN](#).

