

# CORONAVIRUS – WHAT EVERY EMPLOYER NEEDS TO KNOW



## What do I need to tell my employees about COVID-19?

Employers have a duty under Work Health & Safety to provide employees with information about health & safety in the workplace. You should provide your workers with regular updates about COVID-19 and these updates should be consistent with information provided by the Department of Health

Information provided to workers should include:

- Current status of COVID-19 in Australia
- Potential impacts on the workplace and changes to policies
- Information on good hygiene practices at work

## Do I need to stand down my employees?

Currently (as at 20 March 2020) there is no government requirement for broad isolation of workers. The decision to stand down your employees can be made on a business by business basis but you need to ensure you know your obligations regarding paying workers that are stood-down. For more information regarding employee absences please click here.

## As an employer what are my obligations regarding hygiene in the workplace?

As an employer it is your duty to provide and maintain a workplace that is safe and healthy for your employees. Some of the measures you can take to ensure you are providing a compliant workplace includes:

- Providing adequate facilities for workers (soap, hand sanitisers, signage etc)
- Limiting or banning non-essential work travel
- Developing infection control policies
- Directing employees to comply with quarantine measures, particularly following international travel

## If a worker is infected with COVID-19 at work or travelling for work, do they have a worker's compensation claim?

Potentially yes. WorkCover Qld will assess each compensation claim on the relevant facts but if an employee can prove they contracted the virus at work or whilst travelling for work they may have access to worker's compensation.

Employers should be very careful to guard against the risks of employees contracting COVID-19 at work and should seek legal advice on their circumstances if necessary.

## Can I send an employee home if I believe they have COVID-19 symptoms?

Yes. If you believe an employee is posing a health risk to others (such as displaying COVID-19 symptoms) it is not unreasonable to send an employee home on personal leave and request that they get a medical clearance from their doctor before they return to work.

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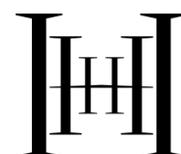
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## Can I tell an employee they can't travel for non-work related reasons?

Generally, no. In most cases an employer can't give an employee direction that impact their personal activities and does not affect their work.

## Is there anything I need to consider if my employees are going to work from home?

Yes. Reducing face to face contact may be an excellent measure to lessen the impact of COVID-19 but there are a number of practical implications employers need to consider. Some important considerations include:

- Not every position can be conducted remotely
- The same Work Health and Safety regulations apply to home work arrangements as they do to employer premises. Employers need to ensure that an employee's work area at home meets WHS.
- Technological capacity to work from home
- Confidentiality and privacy
- Insurance – an injury in the course of an employee's work whilst working from home can result in a worker's compensation claim.

## Can I vary my employee's work hours?

Maybe. The relevant Award or Enterprise Agreement applicable to your workers may restrict you altering existing work arrangements. Prior to making any changes you need to ensure that you get appropriate advice regarding your specific options and obligations.

## If one of my employees tests positive to COVID-19, what is my obligation to my other workers?

Generally, employers should not disclose the reasons for an employee's leave or remote work arrangement, except to those employees who require that information to carry out their own work duties.

If you believe employees have been subject to a credible transmission risk of COVID-19, you should notify these employees as soon as possible so that they can obtain appropriate medical attention.

In these instances, you need to ensure that you make all reasonable efforts not to disclose the individual that may have caused the COVID-19 transmission risk.

*Last Updated 20 March 2020*

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