

AEU NT Member Bulletin 2/2020

20 March 2020

Special bulletin – update #2 on COVID19

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Protecting members’ entitlements – important wins

Your union continues to advocate to ensure the safety of members at work, and the protection of your employment conditions. We have won important commitments from the Commissioner for Public Employment and the Department of Education.

Special Leave

NTPS employees required to self-isolate in accordance with guidelines set by health authorities will have access to two weeks of special leave separate from ordinary entitlements (where working from home arrangements are not feasible).

Enhanced personal leave provisions for employees with coronavirus

If an employee contracts coronavirus, they will access personal leave credits as normal until they have recovered*. If an employee’s personal leave credits are exhausted, the Commissioner has agreed that employees will remain on sick leave on full pay until they have recovered.

* *Workers’ compensation law applies as normal if an employee contracts coronavirus in the course of their work – this is subject to having a claim approved by the insurer.*

Carer’s leave and self-isolation

If an employee is required to take carer’s leave because a dependant is required to self-isolate for two weeks in accordance with the federal guidelines, normal paid leave entitlements will apply. If leave credits are exhausted, additional days at full pay may be approved by the CEO.

Documentation requirements

The Commissioner has agreed to temporarily waive ordinary requirements about providing a medical certificate to cover personal leave. Members who have exhausted their five annual days of leave without a certificate, for whom it is impractical to obtain a medical certificate will be able to provide a [stat dec](#) in its place for absences of one or two days with minor illness (this is always the case in remote locations but will now apply in urban areas as well). Note this should not be a substitute for seeking appropriate medical care. This is directly in response to one of our sub-branches raising concerns about members not being able to see a medical practitioner to obtain a certificate.

Remote localities

- FOILS - where an eligible employee has deferred travel out of community, your FOIL may be carried over for later use – this includes being able to carry it over into next year if necessary.
- Some communities are placing restrictions on people returning if they have travelled outside the Territory. Where a member is required to observe, for example, a 14-day waiting period before returning to community, the Department will pay accommodation and travel allowance so that person is not unfairly disadvantaged. The member may be asked to work in an urban or regional school for those two weeks.

Vulnerable employees

We recognise that some members (and/or those you are caring for) are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID19 infection. This includes older people and those with compromised immune systems, for example. Principals and managers are expected to factor this into their planning, and work with their staff to minimise risk to these employees.

Members in this category should develop a personal action plan in consultation with their line manager. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for members to work from home or seek to transfer to a different role for the time being. If you are in this category, we encourage you to contact the office to discuss your circumstances.

Other issues

- Teachers are being asked to prepare up to two weeks of work for students in an online delivery mode in the event that schools close. This is an additional workload challenge and schools should make allowances to ensure teachers can complete this work. This might mean, for example, cancelling upcoming staff meetings and other professional gatherings to give members time to complete this work. Sub-branch reps should ensure principals consult with members on managing workload issues and reconsidering certain professional duties in the current circumstances.
- Casual staff – many School Council casual staff in schools are concerned about what happens if schools close. The AEU's view is that schools should continue to pay casual staff affected by school closures as though they were at work for at least two weeks and will continue to seek assurances from the Department on this point. This is one way our schools can help look after our community in a time of economic stress for those without secure employment.

Federal Government responds to AEU demands

Yesterday [we wrote to the Prime Minister and the National Cabinet to communicate our concerns about the health and safety of our members](#) who are being asked to keep working and keep schools open. We encourage you to read this letter, which has resonated across the country and resulted in Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan agreeing to meet along with the Chief Medical Officer with AEU Presidents early next week to discuss educators' concerns. We will update members on the outcome of these discussions next week.

Should schools be closing?

In some circles there are calls for a mass shutdown of schools. The AEU has not supported such calls to date, however we remain concerned to ensure the safest possible work environment for our members, of whom so much is being asked at the current time. We continue to advocate a Territory and national level to ensure school-based staff who are on the frontline of this issue are looked after.

We know this is a difficult and stressful time for all of you and want to assure all members that your union is doing everything we can to ensure your safety and wellbeing.

We do very much encourage you to contact us with concerns – all queries will be responded to and directed as appropriate to the NT Government, the Department and OCPE.

NAPLAN 2020 cancelled

The Education Council has today announced that [NAPLAN testing will not go ahead this year](#).

Union office – support available as usual

The Branch Office remains open as normal. However, as a precaution, we have cancelled all travel and workplace visits until the end of the term. We are still very much available to assist members and sub-branches, including with “virtual visits”, meaning AEU officers can conduct video or teleconferencing meetings with sub-branches where requested. You can also phone or email us as normal with any queries.

Please let us know ASAP if your workplace, contact details or income have changed

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