

TAKING TIME OFF DUE TO COVID-19 INFECTION OR EXPOSURE?

Attention all WA public sector employers, including the Department of Justice, WA Health and Mental Health Commission: the AMA (WA) has successfully advocated for changes to the WA Government Sector Labour Relations (GSLR) Circular 06/2020, which outlines leave arrangements for COVID-19.

Recent changes include employees accessing COVID leave prior to exhausting other accrued entitlements, such as personal leave, and the reinstatement of 20 days of COVID leave on an annual basis.

- Employees who now test positive for COVID are able to access their COVID leave before accessing personal leave.
- WA Health employing agencies, in addition to other WA public sector employers, have discretionary power to extend the number of days of COVID leave available to individual employees who are unable to attend work due to:
 - testing positive for COVID; or
 - a government requirement to isolate or quarantine because of exposure or possible exposure to COVID at work.

Members are encouraged to review the most recent version of Circular 06/2020, which can be accessed on the GSLR website: <https://bit.ly/3HLOj9b>

The AMA (WA) has welcomed these recent revisions to Circular 06/2020 as a pragmatic approach towards supporting healthcare workers who risk COVID exposure every day, while serving the health needs of Western Australians.

Following the most recent updates to Circular 06/2020, the AMA (WA) wrote to the WA Health System-Wide Industrial Relations and the Department of Corrective Services seeking confirmation that discretionary powers afforded under section 2.2 of the Circular to provide unlimited COVID leave, will be exercised for all medical practitioners.

SWIR has advised that it has prepared further guidance about practical application of the discretion to grant additional COVID leave in the context of the WA health system, and submitted a proposal to the Minister for consideration.

The AMA (WA) will update members when clarity on the practical application of the discretion to grant additional COVID leave in the context of the WA health system has been confirmed.



St John of God Health Care

St John of God Health Care (SJG) has confirmed with the AMA (WA) that it has reviewed its arrangements for Special Paid Leave and would align to Circular 06/2020. SJG has advised the AMA (WA) that any decision to extend the period of COVID leave beyond 20 days would be based on individual circumstances and appropriate evidence.

Ramsay Health Care

Ramsay Health Care has introduced COVID Special Leave (CSL) in WA. Ramsay employees may be granted up to 20 days' CSL (this includes regular and systematic casual employees with 12 months' service). CSL is paid at the employee's ordinary base rate for rostered ordinary hours – penalties and loadings do not apply, and will be available in the event that a Ramsay employee:

- has an adverse vaccine reaction;
- needs to undertake a PCR test in work time;
- is required to isolate following a PCR test;
- tests positive to COVID-19;
- is otherwise required to isolate or quarantine (except for non-work-related travel reasons).

Any AMA (WA) member who requires support to access unlimited COVID leave can contact the Workplace Relations Team on **(08) 9273 3000** or by emailing mail@amawa.com.au. ■

A COVID-19 Leave Guide for WA Health employees has been produced by the AMA (WA), and members can access it at <https://bit.ly/3MxeILd>