



AWU UPDATE COVID-19

With more and more cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) developing across Queensland, your AWU has been hard at work making sure employers are providing safe and fair workplaces during this tough time.

We've prepared the following answers to FAQs so that you know exactly where you stand.

The AWU is here to help you during this time – if you have an issue at work, make sure to contact your Delegate or Organiser immediately.

WHAT SHOULD MY EMPLOYER BE DOING?

This is an unprecedented situation, and the AWU is calling for all employers right across Queensland to take steps to make sure their workers are safe and being treated fairly.

This includes:

1. Making sure that casual employees continue to be paid, even if they are required to self-isolate or receive treatment;
2. Special leave for employees who are required to stay home to care for children if schools or childcare are closed;
3. Special leave for parents required to stay home to care for their children in the event of school and childcare closures;
4. Ensuring no employee is left financially disadvantaged during this time.

Many businesses and employers across Australia have already committed to doing this – we want everyone to follow suit.

If your employer is refusing to do the right thing and commit to looking after its staff, make sure you and your workmates hold them accountable and demand a better deal. The AWU is always here to help – contact your Organiser if you need assistance.

DOES MY EMPLOYER NEED TO KEEP ME SAFE AT WORK?

Under workplace health and safety laws, employers must take all reasonable steps to keep their employees safe.

The AWU has been reaching out to employers reminding them of this obligation and making it clear that we expect them to make every effort to lower the risk of infection of employees while at work.

CAN I REFUSE TO WORK?

AWU members can refuse to work – but only if there is an imminent risk to their health and safety.

Simply not feeling comfortable or not wanting to work is not enough – you need to be able to prove your health and safety is at immediate risk.

AWU Officials are working around the clock to keep workplaces safe - if you have a safety matter at your workplace make sure you contact your Organiser immediately.

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CAN MY EMPLOYER FORCE ME TO USE SICK LEAVE?

If you are fit, ready and willing to work but are directed by your employer not to attend work, you cannot be forced to take sick leave and your employer should pay you as normal.

CAN CASUAL WORKERS ACCESS SICK LEAVE?

While casual workers do not have an automatic entitlement to paid sick leave, we're calling on employers to do the right thing and make sure they can still pay their bills even if they can't attend work.

There are other options available to casual workers who do not receive sick leave and cannot attend work including some government payments – speak to your AWU Organiser if you need assistance.

Remember, it is against the law for an employer to discriminate or take any adverse action a casual employee who has not been able to work due to medical reasons, including self-isolation. If your employer is treating you differently – make sure to speak to the AWU.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I CONTRACT COVID-19 AT WORK?

If you contract COVID-19 at work you can make a WorkCover claim for assistance.

Medical evidence is vital for a successful WorkCover claim and you need to be able to show that you caught the disease in the course of your work duties.

Make sure you contact the AWU for advice on any WorkCover issues straight away.

CAN MY WORKPLACE BE SHUT DOWN?

While your rights at work during this time will depend upon your workplace agreement or award, the AWU is here to help no matter what.

While some awards and agreements do allow employees to be stood down when workplaces close in extreme circumstances, the AWU firmly believes that such provisions do not currently apply and every worker should continue to be paid.

There has never been a more important time to be a member of the AWU.

AWU Officials are doing everything they can to make sure our members are kept safe and treated fairly at work.

If you need any assistance or help during this time – make sure you speak to your AWU Delegate or Organiser straight away.

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