



# OMICRON AND WORKPLACE SAFETY

This fact sheet is produced for members of the Australian Services Union. For individual advice and support email [help@asu.org.au](mailto:help@asu.org.au) or call **02 9310 4000**.

The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is highly transmissible and infection rates are increasing at a rapid rate.

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## STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO MINIMISE RISK AT WORK

Employers have a duty to provide a safe workplace regardless of the number of COVID-19 cases in the community. They must eliminate risk or reduce as much as reasonably practicable. They have to consult workers on safety measures and are required to do risk assessments.

### Your work should provide:

- Appropriate PPE (P5/N95 Masks and Eye Shields are the best forms of PPE)
- Access to Rapid Antigen Tests
- Paid isolation leave
- Support to all COVID positive workers

Every service provider is also required to have plans to keep you and the people you support safe as possible.

You should know about these plans, and they should be updated regularly. If your work doesn't have safety plans, contact your union.

### The plan should consider the following:

- Review activities to minimise gathering
- Options to work outside
- Social distancing
- Ventilation
- Hygiene and cleaning
- Work From Home where you can

Workers should also get your booster shot as soon as eligible.



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## WHAT TO DO IF YOU TEST POSITIVE?

You and your household must isolate for 7 days, even if vaccinated. Tell your employer if you were at the workplace while infectious (2 days before symptoms appeared). You should not go to work while you're isolating or have symptoms. Check out the NSW Health Advice for what to do when positive.

If you caught COVID at work you may be eligible for Workers Compensation. Union members should email [help@asu.org.au](mailto:help@asu.org.au) for an individual consultation.

## SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO COVID POSITIVE WORKERS

Over 20,000 community and disability workers have access to special Paid Pandemic Leave. Check if your organisation is on this list. If not, you are entitled to access personal leave (sick leave).

**If you are casual or have exhausted all your paid leave entitlements, you may be eligible for the following payments:**

- Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment via Services Australia (\$750 per week)
- Test and Isolate Payment via Services NSW (One-off \$320)

You may be entitled to use other leave such as annual, long service, unpaid sick leave or unpaid pandemic leave under the Award.

The union is calling for paid isolation leave for all workers.

## SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO THOSE ISOLATING AS CLOSE CONTACTS

If you are able to work from home for your isolation period, your employer should allow this even if you don't normally work from home.

If your exposure to COVID was at work, you may be eligible for paid isolation leave if your employer has agreed to provide this.

**If there is no isolation leave available and you cannot work from home, other options include:**

- Use of other paid leave entitlements such as annual leave, part-annual leave, or Long Service Leave
- Unpaid pandemic leave under the Award
- Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment via Services Australia (\$750 per week)
- Test and Isolate Payment via Services NSW (One-off \$320)



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## SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO IS COVID POSITIVE

If you are supporting somebody who is COVID positive additional safety measures need to be taken.

### Additional safety measures include:

- Training and information on the Covid-care protocols for your site and particular clients, to minimize risk and work as safely as possible
- Access to 24-hour supervision
- Access and training on using full PPE (P5/N95 masks, eye shields and appropriate infection control & hygiene measures)
- Vaccination requirements including boosters
- Consideration of staff vulnerabilities (immune compromised, pregnant, high risk categories)
- Access to RAT to regularly test and screen in case you get COVID
- Additional paid leave should be given if you have to isolate after exposure
- Agreement on additional payments – e.g. Covid Care Allowance or overtime for additional hours worked if longer shifts are requested.

NDIS service providers, Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS), and Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) services get additional funds to support a participant who is COVID positive.

Remember, you have the right to refuse work that is unsafe under the WHS Act and employers cannot force you to work in unsafe situations. If you feel unsafe at work, contact the union immediately.

## WE ARE BY YOUR SIDE

The Australian Services Union are advocating to Government for:

- Free, accessible RAT tests
- Appropriate PPE for all workers
- Paid Isolation Leave

Remember, we have other supports to assist members if you are isolating or impacted by COVID:

- Call our Member Assistance Line – we are here to help!
- Discounts to save on groceries & other essential supplies
- On-demand short courses and information sessions to expand knowledge and upskill
- ASU Jobs Connect & Career Advisory Service – polish up your CV, practice interview skills, or seek career advice if you are looking to change jobs



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## USEFUL LINKS

- ASU Member Assistance Line – Call us on **(02) 9310 4000** or email us at [help@asu.org.au](mailto:help@asu.org.au) if you have any questions!
- **Australian Government Vaccine Booking Service**  
[covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/booking](https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/booking)
- **NSW Health Vaccine Clinics**  
[www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/vaccination/get-vaccinated/nsw-health-vaccination-clinics](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/vaccination/get-vaccinated/nsw-health-vaccination-clinics)
- **List of Organisations that have Paid Isolation Leave**  
[www.asumembers.org.au/paid\\_isolation\\_leave](https://www.asumembers.org.au/paid_isolation_leave)
- **Petition for Universal Paid Isolation Leave**  
[www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/paid-isolation-leave-for-all-workers](https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/paid-isolation-leave-for-all-workers)
- **Petition for Free Rapid Antigen Tests**  
[www.asumembers.org.au/free\\_rats\\_now](https://www.asumembers.org.au/free_rats_now)
- **Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment**  
[www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment)
- **NSW Test and Isolate Payment**  
[www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-test-and-isolate-support-payment](https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-test-and-isolate-support-payment)
- **National Coronavirus Health Information Line**  
1800 020 080
- **Service NSW Self-Isolation Requirements Hotline**  
131 450
- **NSW Health Confirmed Covid Case Factsheet**  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/confirmed-cases.pdf](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/confirmed-cases.pdf)
- **NSW Health Self-Isolation and Close Contact Factsheet**  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/self-isolation-covid-and-close.pdf](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/self-isolation-covid-and-close.pdf)
- **Community Developed RAT Locator**  
[findarat.com.au](https://findarat.com.au)
- **Community Developed PCR Locator**  
[covidtestfinder.com.au](https://covidtestfinder.com.au)

### DISCLAIMER:

*This is not official Health Advice. Speak to your Doctor about your specific circumstances. This Information accurate as of January 13 2022. For advice about your specific circumstances contact the union [www.asumembers.org.au](https://www.asumembers.org.au)*

