



## **ETU Guiding Principles in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)-related employment issues**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that COVID-19 is a pandemic. As at 16 March 2020, there were 299 confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19), including 5 deaths, in Australia.

Coronavirus spreads from person to person via droplets of infected fluid. These are passed on through direct hand-to-hand contact, contact with contaminated surfaces, or when someone standing close to an infected person breathes in droplets that have been coughed or sneezed into the air. This is similar to the seasonal flu.

ETU members are strongly encouraged to implement the following recommendations at work and at home to assist in preventing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

### **Hand hygiene**

The World Health Organisation lists handwashing as the most important measure you can take in preventing the spread of coronavirus. Hand hygiene can help you reduce your risk of picking up COVID-19 or other communicable diseases.

You should wash your hands:

- after you cough or sneeze;
- when you have been using public transport;
- before you eat and when you prepare food;
- after going to the toilet;
- when you care for someone who is unwell.

### **Coughs and sneezes hygiene**

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing, sneezing, wiping or blowing your nose. Put the tissue in the bin after use and wash your hands.

If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow rather than your hand.

### **What if I become unwell with flu-like symptoms?**

High fever is the most common symptom of COVID-19, along with coughing, sneezing, sore throat, shortness of breath and body aches.

If you experience these symptoms or have come into close contact with someone who has experienced these symptoms, please seek medical advice. You may need to be tested for COVID-19.

If you are experiencing these symptoms, do not come to work until they have cleared, and you have been given a medical certificate stating that you are fit to return to work.

ETU members are strongly encouraged to contact your medical practitioner or [state or territory health authority](#) if you have any questions about testing or the welfare of people with the virus.

## **Leave and workplace rights**

The ETU has members engaged in many and varied industries across Australia and a large proportion of ETU members will be covered by enterprise agreements. In the event that your employment is affected by COVID-19, and in the absence of any specific provisions in your enterprise agreement, the ETU recommends the following guiding principles should apply:

1. Any worker directed by their Employer to remain at home as a direct or indirect result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), should continue to receive their normal weekly wage without any reduction in their personal or annual leave provisions.
2. Any worker who self-isolates on the basis of their thinking that they have contracted COVID-19 *not* in connection with their employment should seek medical advice and obtain medical certificates to assist them in claiming personal leave.
3. Any worker who is required to self-isolate as a direct result of contracting COVID-19 in connection with their employment should be paid their normal weekly wage without any reduction in their leave entitlements.

Workers' compensation is a relevant consideration for workers who contract COVID-19 in connection with their employment.

The above guiding principles are for general advice only and should not be relied upon as legal, industrial or medical advice. Specific legal and industrial advice regarding your personal circumstances should be sought from your ETU Office in your State or Territory. Contact your ETU Office urgently if your employer:

- a. Purports to institute a "stand down";
- b. Proposes to terminate you employment;
- c. Proposes to implement forced leave; and/or
- d. Proposes to implement forced unpaid leave

ETU members are encouraged to contact their medical practitioner for medical advice.

**QLD/NT – (07) 3846 2477**

**VIC – (03) 8329 0000**

**SA – (08) 8234 2130**

**NSW/ACT – (02) 9267 4844**

**TAS – (03) 6228 0098**

**WA – (08) 9440 3522**

*Authorised by Allen Hicks, Divisional Secretary, Electrical Trades Union of Australia.*