

# Support for employees affected by the Novel Coronavirus

## Statement

The purpose of this guidance note is to inform affected Queensland Health services and employees of the entitlements and benefits they may be eligible to access in relation to the Novel Coronavirus (also called COVID-19).

### 1. Novel Coronavirus

This guidance note provides Queensland Health managers and employees with an overview of information which may assist in identifying entitlements and other information to support the workforce throughout this event.

### 2. Employee entitlements

#### 2.1 Circumstances

For the purposes of this Guidance Note, the following circumstances apply as advised (as at 16 March 2020) by the Chief Health Officer, Queensland Health:

- All international travellers entering Australia from midnight (12.00am) 15 March 2020 are required to self-isolate for 14 days from the country departure date.
- Persons who have visited or transited through mainland China or Iran in the past 14 days, or South Korea (on or after 9.00pm 5 March 2020), Italy (on or after 6.00pm 11 March 2020), **must** self-quarantine\* for 14 days after departing the relevant country.
- Persons who have been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of Novel Coronavirus, **must** self-quarantine for 14 days after the last date of contact with the confirmed case.

All persons who are in the above categories and feel unwell, should seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your General Practitioner or emergency department and mention your travel history or your contact with someone with Novel Coronavirus, before you arrive.

Refer to the [Queensland Health Self-quarantine](#) page which includes more information on self-quarantining.

\* **Self-quarantine** (may also be referred to as self-isolation or home-isolation) means staying at home and not leaving. You should keep away from others living in the home where possible (e.g. own bathroom, bedroom and closed-door space), and also not accept visitors during the quarantine period.

#### Scenario:

Employee returning to Brisbane from South Korea, travelled as follows:

- Left South Korea at 9.00am local time (i.e. 10.00am AEST) on 6 March 2020
- Arrived in Brisbane at 11.15pm AEST on 6 March 2020.

The self-quarantine period of 14 days would commence at 10.00am AEST on 6 March 2020, which is the day the employee left South Korea. The employee would not be able to return to the workplace any sooner than when the 14 days self-quarantine period has lapsed, i.e. 10.00am AEST on 20 March 2020.



## 2.2 Leave

Different leave types, either paid or unpaid, may be granted to employees directly affected by this event. An employee must provide evidence if requested by the leave delegate, e.g. copy of passport page, airline ticket.

### 2.2.1 Discretionary special leave

The [PSC Directive 05/17: Special Leave](#) provides for paid discretionary special leave.

Permanent and temporary, full-time and part-time Queensland Health employees may apply for paid discretionary special leave in circumstances where they have been directed not to attend work even though they are not sick, if the conditions outlined in section 2.1 are met.

A leave application is to be submitted via *myHR* for any employee accessing special discretionary leave (under “Other Leave” specifying “Special discretionary leave - Coronavirus”) and is to be approved by the relevant delegate.

*Note:* As an alternative to paid special discretionary leave, an appropriate delegate may approve the use of flexible work arrangements (working from home) where appropriate.

*Note:* Discretionary leave entitlements apply to part-time employees on a pro-rata basis.

*Note:* The discretionary leave provisions do not apply to casual employees. However, where a long-term casual employee may be required to self-quarantine, access to any discretionary special leave should be raised on a case-by-case basis for consideration of the delegate.

*Note:* Paid discretionary leave would be based and paid on the employee’s roster (as they would have worked) and/or projected roster where relevant.

### 2.2.2 Leave for caring purposes

Permanent and temporary, full-time and part-time Queensland Health employees required to provide care or support for a dependent who is in self-quarantine and unable to attend childcare, school, (in accordance with advice from the Chief Health Officer as at 10 March 2020) may access carer’s leave in accordance with the relevant industrial instrument. Carer’s leave is taken from the employee’s current sick leave balance. Refer to [Carer's leave HR Policy C9](#).

Some childcare providers may place requirements on children who have been anywhere overseas, to not attend childcare for 14 days after their departure from the overseas country. These are local decisions by providers. Where an employee does not have accrued sick leave available to cover the full 14-day caring period, the employee may apply for unpaid leave, access other paid leave entitlements, or utilise accrued hours/flexi time.

Due consideration is to be extended to casual employees who are required to provide care or support for a dependent who is in self-quarantine for up to 14 days, in relation to offering shifts.

A leave application is to be submitted via *myHR* for an employee accessing carer’s leave or other paid or unpaid leave types.

### 2.2.3 Sick leave

Where an employee has contracted the Novel Coronavirus, not related to the workplace, they may access their sick leave entitlement in accordance with the [Sick leave HR Policy C64](#) and relevant industrial instrument.

A leave application is to be submitted via *myHR* for any employee accessing sick leave.

## 3. Returning to work after a period of self-quarantine

If you have undertaken your 14 days self-quarantine period without any symptoms you are free to return to work and go about your usual activities.

If you returned from travel to mainland China or Iran in the past 14 days, or South Korea (on or after 9.00pm 5 March 2020), or Italy (on or after 6.00pm 11 March 2020), and were issued with a formal notice to self-quarantine, you will receive a call from a 13 HEALTH nurse at the end of the 14 days. The nurse will assess your condition and either:

- if you are well, send an email or text message confirming the end of your self-quarantine period and that you are free to go about your daily life, e.g. return to work
- if you are unwell, require you to remain in self-quarantine and arrange a visit to you to by a Queensland Health nurse for testing.

You should ensure you contact your line manager to advise them you will either be returning to work as planned or of your requirement to remain in self-quarantine. You and your line manager should arrange a further leave form if required.

For the latest self-quarantine advice read [Queensland Health's FAQs](#).

## 4. Employee assistance service (EAS)

It is appreciated that employees may need additional support during this event. All employees of Queensland Health and their immediate family members have access to confidential counselling and support services through the [local EAS provider](#).