



Public Sector Labour Relations

Shaping a contemporary public sector workforce

Guidance for employers on leave arrangements for self-quarantine following travel

This bulletin provides guidance to public sector employers about decisions on compassionate access to leave under Circular 6/2020 – Leave arrangements for COVID-19 (the Circular).

Controlled border arrangements in WA

From 14 November 2020, and subject to ongoing low numbers in other jurisdictions, arrivals in WA:

- from 'very low risk States and Territories' (28 days of no community spread) do not have to quarantine, subject to screening and possible testing on arrival;
- from 'low risk States and Territories' (under 5 community cases per day for 14 days) must quarantine for 14 days and undergo a COVID test on day 11; and
- from overseas must quarantine in a hotel for 14 days and be tested on day 11.

COVID-19 leave and self-quarantine

The Circular allows for up to 20 days of paid COVID-19 leave for public sector employees in some situations. The leave is intended for use by employees who cannot attend work for reasons beyond their control related to COVID-19. There is no expectation that COVID-19 leave balances will be increased in future. All decisions about access to the leave should be made in consideration of the need for it to be available if WA experiences a future COVID-19 outbreak.

Under paragraph 3.4 of the Circular, COVID-19 leave is not available to cover absence from work because of a requirement to self-quarantine after travel, unless the employer determines otherwise for compassionate reasons. Compassionate access to COVID-19 leave for self-quarantine may only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances. Employers will need to report on any compassionate access and the reasons for granting it.

Where an employee is required to self-quarantine following travel, employers must first assess whether the employee can work remotely. Where working remotely is not possible, the employee may access their existing leave credits or leave without pay for the self-quarantine period.

The following principles are to guide decision-making about compassionate access to COVID-19 leave:

1. Where the employee has travelled for recreational reasons, there is no right to access COVID-19 leave and compassionate access should not be granted.
2. Where the employee has travelled due to a pressing need – for instance, to access medical treatment, to visit a relative who has suffered a serious medical episode or whose death is imminent, or to attend a funeral – compassionate access to COVID-19 leave can be considered if the employee does not have enough other paid leave entitlements to cover the self-quarantine period.

Under the Circular, employers can require employees to provide reasonable evidence to support COVID-19 leave being granted. This could include evidence of the reasons for travelling.

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