

STATEMENT ABOUT SUPPORT FOR WORKERS AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS ISSUES

United Workers Union members proudly work across a range of essential industries in every corner of the country. Our members' work reaches millions of people every single day of their lives.

We work in education, aged care, health care and emergency services. We keep public spaces safe and clean; get you the goods you need; and put food on your dinner tables.

Working people are on the frontline of the coronavirus (COVID-19) threat. We have a responsibility to ensure workers are safe and their rights are protected as this threat grows.

Now is the time for all Australians to get behind the workers who keep our communities running.

UWU believes all Australian workers need significant back-up and support, including from employers and Government, to deal with this global health crisis.

1. If workers cannot work due to coronavirus concerns, they should not lose pay.

Workers may not be able to work due to coronavirus concerns because:

- They are required to undergo isolation; or
- Their workplace is shut down, due to coronavirus concerns;
- They need to take leave to care for others.

In these cases workers – whether they are permanent or casual - should be fully compensated for all time lost, without losing sick leave benefits.

2. The Federal Government needs to support workers and the community.

UWU supports calls for a Government stimulus package directed specifically to ensure workers are supported and do not lose pay as a result of coronavirus concerns. Government needs to step up to ensure minimal economic impact on the Australian community.

3. Workers must be entitled to avoid unsafe workplace situations

Employers must ensure that the work environment poses no risk to employees.

Employees must be allowed to refuse to work if they believe they are at risk.

HSR's must be entitled to direct a stoppage of work if there is a coronavirus risk.



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4. Workers must be consulted about employer response to coronavirus

Where workplace arrangements need to be varied to deal with coronavirus concerns, these arrangements must be:

- made in advance and in consultation with employees and their unions; and
- within the relevant legislative framework; and
- applied fairly and equitably at the workplace.

5. Workers falling into special categories must be supported

Workers who are in higher risk categories, such as people who are immune suppressed, or who have elderly caring responsibilities, need to be supported through:

- Being able to request, and be granted additional leave for work without disadvantage
- Being able to request, and be granted, reasonable alternative work arrangements such as redeployment or work from home options

6. Workers must be supplied with appropriate personal protective equipment

Workers must be supplied with appropriate personal protective equipment, especially in high risk situations, such as where the workplace has large public exposure (for example airports, hospitals, stadia, sporting and entertainment venues).

Appropriate PPE can include:

- powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs),
- P2/ N95 face-mask
- eye protection
- gloves, and gown