

# CORONAVIRUS UPDATE - 4 MARCH 2020

Dear Members,

## CONFIRMED AUSTRALIAN CASES

As last reported on 3 March, there are 33 confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Australia. Of the total cases reported, 21 of these cases are reported to have recovered, 1 person has sadly passed. The remaining cases are in a stable condition.

## TRAVEL ADVICE

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has issued the following travel advice

- China and Iran – **do not travel**
- South Korea, Mongolia, Japan and Italy – **exercise a high degree of caution**
- Northern Italy – **reconsider your need to travel**

Members should follow this advice to minimise risk of being exposed to the virus.

## SELF ISOLATION

Members who have recently travelled to China or Iran should isolate themselves to prevent exposure to their colleagues and the community. Specifically, if you have:

- Left or transited through mainland China in the past 14 days, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date you left
- Left or transited through Iran on or after 1 March, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date you left
- Been in close contact with a person confirmed to be infected with coronavirus, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the last date of contact

## EMPLOYMENT ENTITLEMENTS WHILST IN SELF ISOLATION

Members who fall within the above categories should notify their managers immediately and **stay home – do not come to work**. Your workplace will attempt to accommodate you performing duties from home, if you are able to do so. If your duties cannot be performed from home **you will be paid**.

## STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK

Members who exhibit any cold or flu like symptoms **should not come to work**.

**Avail of sick leave and seek medical treatment.** As we approach the onset of the cold season, this is even more important. By doing so, you will alleviate any potential unnecessary panic caused within your workplace.

## FREE FLU VACCINE

Your Union has confirmed that employees at Australia Post will once again be offered a free flu vaccine this year. The communication process will commence at the end of this month and vaccinations will occur from early April.

While the flu vaccine will not prevent coronavirus infection, it is recommended that as many members as possible accept the vaccine to limit the number of people with symptoms similar to coronavirus – again, alleviating any potential unnecessary panic at work, but also to take the burden off our health system.

The earlier you receive the vaccine, the more effective it will be going in to the colder months.

## OCCUPATIONAL SPECIFIC ADVICE

An updated copy of our Coronavirus Information sheet is attached to this bulletin. It is recommended that members read and understand the information contained in that publication. Your Union will update the fact sheet as required and will always have an up to date version available online at [www.cwu.org.au](http://www.cwu.org.au).

Should you require any further information with any of the above, please contact your State Branch Official immediately for assistance.

Yours faithfully,

  
**Nick Townsend**  
**BRANCH SECRETARY**



Connecting  
our community

communication workers union  
**CWUnion**

4 March 2020

# NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

## INFORMATION FOR CWU/CEPU MEMBERS

### What is Novel Coronavirus?

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new coronavirus primarily affecting people who have recently been in mainland China and Iran, or had contact with a confirmed case of the virus. It's likely that the coronavirus originally came from an animal, and there is now evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

Symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath. Shortness of breath is a sign of possible pneumonia that requires prompt medical attention.

**The Australian Government Department of Health considers the industrial risk to border staff, including those working in mail and processing, to be low.**

### Can the virus be contracted through mail handling?

Australian Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly said that the coronavirus was being spread by "droplets" and it was not an airborne disease like measles. They are spread when people cough or sneeze but they rapidly die once they hit a surface. He said someone would have to be in a face-to-face conversation with someone who has coronavirus for at least 15 minutes to be at risk of infection.

It can also be spread via contaminated surfaces if someone touches their nose or mouth after touching a surface that has been coughed or sneezed on by an infected person.

But he said you could not get the disease from parcels and passing someone was "virtually totally safe".

### Should I be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)?

The Australian Government Department of Health advises that those working in cargo and mail, processing areas and other areas of air and sea ports are not considered to be at a high risk and that **PPE in the form of gloves, gowns, eye protection or face shields is not considered necessary** when performing these roles.

However, frequent hand-washing (including the proper use of alcohol-based sanitisers) and cough etiquette should still be practiced in this setting.

If a member elects to wear disposable gloves, or other PPE items, regular hand hygiene is still required and care must be taken to avoid breaching the glove material.

A face-mask will not protect you against becoming infected. While the use of face-masks can help to prevent transmission of disease from infected patients to others, face masks are not currently recommended for use by healthy members of the public for the prevention of infections like novel coronavirus.

### How is spread prevented?

Practising good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or alcohol-based hand gel, before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet;
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow; and
- Do not attend work when sick. **Avail of your sick leave, see your doctor and avoid contact with others.**

This bulletin has been prepared using information provided by the Australian Government Department of Health, current as at 4 March 2020. COVID-19 is an emerging worldwide threat and should the above advice change, we will advise members. Further information is available at the Department of Health's website at: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

communication workers union  
**CWUnion**  
Australia  
Connecting our community  
CEPU