

Keeping you safe, fighting for your jobs

A statement from your Union leadership team

Since the birth of our industries, the establishment of the PMG, **communication workers** across our postal and telecommunications workforces have played a historically significant role in **connecting our community**.

Even in times of crisis – natural disasters, conflict, economic calamity – our members have always been there, steadily reaching every Australian home and business in their time of need. Today is no different.

However, our generation has never experienced a challenge like what is currently evolving on our shores.

The COVID-19 global pandemic is emerging as one of, if not the most, serious threat to the health of our nation.

These are uncertain times and hundreds of thousands across our country are avoiding public places in an attempt to **flatten the curve** – and Australians are relying on the services our members work so hard to provide, more than ever, to keep them connected.

We know postal and telecommunications workers are ready to meet that challenge.

And we know you are relying on us to help you meet that challenge, safely.

Across our major employer groups, a number of new health and safety initiatives have already been introduced to mitigate your risk to exposure. However, this doesn't always mean they'll get it right. This is reasonably expected as they, too, are navigating uncharted waters.

But we want you to be assured that your Union leadership team are in constant communication with your employers at the most senior levels – constantly assessing these initiatives and representing enhancements to ensure compliance with medical advice and recommendations.

In saying that, we are relying on members to bring matters, that need to be addressed, to our attention. At this point in time, everybody agrees there is no room for arrogance – and as we raise our members' concerns, it is overwhelmingly being recognised that not every plan that looks good on paper is going to fit every unique local scenario. So, we are encouraging members to report those hiccups to your Branch Officials so that we can ensure they are addressed.

The other important matter to take note of is the balancing act currently being performed by Unions, employers and governments across the country in an attempt to maximise the opportunities for workers to remain in their jobs, whilst ensuring their safety, and that of the community, is not compromised.

The unavoidable consequence of measures being taken by governments to minimise an overwhelming burden on our nation's health system is impacting on our economy, severely.

Employers, large and small, are closing their doors and shedding jobs by the tens of thousands, every day.

The hundreds of thousands of Australians who have been stood down, or dismissed entirely, over the past few weeks is utterly devastating and likened to those most of us have only read about in history books.

Whilst the essential services you perform are linked to some security, it is critical that we don't lose sight of, and become complacent to, the fact that our industries are not completely immune to what is happening around us.

Every time a business shuts its doors, it has a flow-on effect on a number of different sectors – including ours.

Businesses are shutting their doors and not paying their internet bills, their EFTPOS terminals are switched off, they're putting off repairs and maintenance and yet putting the greatest strain on our data networks we've ever seen. Fulfillment warehouses are shutting down, retailers running out of stock to sell are cancelling their UMS bookings, collapsed businesses are not paying their postage accounts and overseas parcels and air freighted stock to Australian online retailers is drying up rapidly as airlines ground aircraft and halt overseas flights.

These are just some of the scenarios that are already having a direct impact on our industries.

We know that some of you have already felt these impacts, whilst for some of you, it may seem like *business as usual*.

But as this pandemic continues to evolve, things are now changing hourly – not just daily, anymore. And we must be clear and honest with members: there will be more change, it is unavoidable.

That's why we're consulting with your employers, many times daily, holding them to account as they continue to relocate staff, redesign work functions around safety principles, seek alternative revenue and consider opportunities to curb discretionary spending to sustain revenue and cashflow in order to mitigate against aggressively negative effects on your employment.

We understand some of this has already caused frustration, particularly where some of these impacts may not yet be obvious and apparent in your workplace. We share those frustrations and your reactions; your thoughts and your feelings are not indifferent to those held by us.

However, whilst the extent of the impact this pandemic on your employers remains to be fully understood, it is anecdotally clear, at this point, that we are in for a rough ride. **It would be dishonest and irresponsible for anybody to claim any different.**

As the situation develops, we will continue to keep you informed. We are working on improving communications to members to ensure they receive clear and consistent advice on developments, as they emerge. In addition to the ways we already communicate with you, we are currently developing a standalone website dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our industries.

This special dedicated online resource will make it easier than ever for members to access a single portal for the most up to date news, announcements, impacts on operations and important resources to help you and your colleagues stay safe at work as we navigate through this crisis.

We are working on having this important new web tool, which will be completely mobile friendly, online and operational in the coming days. We'll let you know as soon as it's available.

Finally, we are compelled to conclude by recognising the extraordinary role you are all playing in the midst of this devastating crisis.

No matter where you work in our industries, your selflessness, your courage and your unwavering dedication to keep our community connected, in the face of such uncertainty, is nothing short of commendable.

It is startling, and indeed extremely humbling, to reflect on the effect this crisis has had on all of our lives, in such a short space of time. Many of you are understandably anxious for your health and that of those closest to you – not to mention the questions surrounding how this crisis is going to affect you in your jobs.

Please be assured that wherever an opportunity presents itself to minimise risks to your health and keep you gainfully employed and taking home a wage, we are pushing harder than ever to ensure those opportunities are seized – this is occurring constantly.

At this moment, take pride in your emergence as some of the most important people within our society – more so than any millionaire sitting in an ivory tower.

Postal and telecommunications workers are on the front-lines of the pandemic response and it is crucial that your essential roles and your job security are at the forefront of any considerations for support, investment and stimulus. Ignoring this would be disastrous to our nation of millions who are relying on you to keep them connected – and we will continue to remind your employers, along with our State and Federal Governments, of that fact.

Together, we will get through this.

Please continue to support each other, encourage one another, serve each other and keep safe.

Yours in unity,



NICK TOWNSEND
BRANCH SECRETARY



SHANE MURPHY
NATIONAL PRESIDENT



GREG RAYNER
NATIONAL SECRETARY



Connecting
our community

communication workers union

CWUunion