

COVID-19 Metro North Workforce FAQs

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are designed as a reference for managers and team members involved in or affected by COVID-19 Virus by outlining the HR response to a number of situations.

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with [Guidance note – Support for employees affected by the novel coronavirus](#) and [Frequently Asked HR Questions](#) provided by the Department of Health.

Different leave types may be granted to employees directly affected by COVID-19. Refer to the table attached for detailed information on workplace consideration, myHR leave codes and HR Delegation levels. Suitable supporting documentation may be requested by your line manager and/or Delegate.

Frequently Asked Questions

Self-isolation/self-quarantine

1. I have returned from overseas and I am required to self-isolate for 14 days.

If you are well, flexible work options (including work from home) should be discussed with your line manager. Where this is not suitable, Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for rostered shifts during the 14-day period applies.

2. I have COVID-19-like symptoms and I am waiting for my test result. My result came back negative and I am at home sick.

You may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) while you wait for your test results. If your result is negative, you should access your sick leave until you are fit to work.

3. I have COVID-19-like symptoms and I am waiting for my test result. My result came back positive and I am at home with a COVID-19 (viral) infection.

You may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) while you wait for your results. If your result is positive, you should then access your sick leave. Once your sick leave is exhausted, you may access Paid Special Pandemic Leave for up to 20 shifts. If you choose, you may then access your recreation and/or (early access) long service leave. If you are still unwell, you may apply for sick leave without pay.

4. I have been in close contact* with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 (including a household member) and have been directed to self-quarantine for 14 days.

If you are well, flexible work options (including work from home) should be discussed with your line manager. Where this is not suitable, Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for rostered shifts during the 14-day period applies.

5. My work area has been declared a COVID-19 cluster and I have been directed not to attend work.

Flexible work options (including work from home or from another hub) should be discussed with your line manager. While this is being considered, you may be 'rostered but not required to attend work'. Where this is not suitable you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 rostered shifts.

6. I want to voluntarily 'self-isolate' because I'm concerned for my wellbeing. What arrangements should be considered?

Please discuss this with your manager. Paid Special Leave nor Special Pandemic Leave provisions do not apply in this instance. You should talk to your manager to identify if there are any suitable work options for your circumstance which may include working from home or deployment to another area. Where this is not appropriate, you may wish to consider applying for annual leave or long service leave. These matters will be considered on a case by case basis.

7. Employee returns from interstate and is required to self-quarantine.

Please refer to the Queensland [Chief Health Officer public health direction \(see link\)](#) for further clarification on whether a mandatory isolation is required. If you are required to self-quarantine and feel well, flexible work options (including work from home) should be discussed with your line manager. Where this is not suitable, Special Paid Leave (non-discretionary leave in a disaster) for rostered shifts during the 14-day period applies.

All staff returning to Queensland from a hotspot will need to take personal leave for the 14-day self-quarantine requirements in lieu of Special Paid Leave.

8. Employee returns from a close family member's funeral interstate and must self-isolate.

You may apply for 2 days of bereavement leave. If you require additional leave, you may choose to apply for recreation and/or long service leave. Please discuss your specific circumstances with your manager to determine whether self-isolation is required.

All staff returning to Queensland from a hotspot will need to take personal leave for the 14-day self-quarantine requirements in lieu of Special Paid Leave.

9. An employee is travelling back to Australia from overseas through interstate. Are they required to self-quarantine in the arriving state and then again when entering Qld?

People arriving from overseas must self-quarantine in accordance with [Australian requirements \(see link\)](#).

People arriving from interstate should refer to the [Queensland Chief Health Officer public health direction \(see link\)](#) for clarification on whether they must self-quarantine.

If you are required to self-quarantine and feel well, flexible work options (including work from home) should be discussed with your line manager. Where this is not suitable, Special Paid Leave (non-discretionary leave in a disaster) for rostered shifts during each 14-day period applies.

Caring responsibilities

10. I need to care for an immediate family member who has an *actual or suspected* COVID-19 (viral) infection.

You may access carer's leave, which is debited from your sick leave accruals. Once your sick leave is exhausted, you may access Paid Special Pandemic Leave for up to 20 shifts. If you choose, you may then access your recreation and/or (early access) long service leave. If they are still unwell, you may apply for carer's leave (without pay).

11. I need to care for my child/ren as a result of school or childcare centre closures. What arrangements should be considered?

The Queensland Government decided to keep schools open for essential workers, this includes Metro North employees. If your childcare centre has closed and you need to take leave to look after your child/ren as a result of the closures, you may access carer's leave, which is debited from your sick leave accruals. Once your sick leave is exhausted, you may access Paid Special Pandemic Leave for up to 20 shifts. If you choose, you may then access your recreation and/or (early access) long service leave.

In some instances, it may be suitable to work from home and this option should be discussed with your line manager.

12. Queensland schools will be learning at home for the first five weeks of term two (commencing 20 April until at least 22 May), with schools only open for vulnerable children and the children of essential workers. What are my options?

All staff are considered essential workers due to our important role in supporting the delivery of care and services to Queenslanders, meaning schools remain open for your children during term two.

Some employees may choose not to send their children to school during this time, and these employees need to discuss the impacts of this decision with their line manager. Flexible work options (work from home) should be discussed. Where this is not suitable, you may access carer's leave, which is debited from your sick leave accruals. Once your sick leave is exhausted, you may then choose to access your recreation and/or long service leave. Special Pandemic Leave provisions do not apply in this instance as schools remain open.

13. Schools remain open and my child is expected to attend, however I want to voluntarily take my child/ren out of school because I'm concerned for their wellbeing. What arrangements should be considered?

Flexible work options (work from home) should be discussed with your line manager. Where this is not suitable, you may access carer's leave, which is debited from your sick leave accruals. Once your sick leave is exhausted, you may then choose to access your recreation and/or long service leave. Special Pandemic Leave provisions do not apply in this instance as schools remain open.

14. Employee is caring for a child with a medical condition, and the employee has provided medical advice that the child should be isolated, and therefore, the employee should stay away from work.

Please discuss this with your manager. You may broadly follow the process outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups to discuss mitigating strategies. While options are being considered, you may be 'rostered but not required to attend work'. Where no suitable deployment options are available, you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 rostered shifts, or until suitable deployment options are available, whichever is sooner. If you choose, you may then access carer's leave, recreation and/or long service leave. After this, you may apply for leave without pay.

15. Employee is caring for someone in the vulnerable group (e.g. a 70 year old parent) and/or lives with someone in the vulnerable group and has been advised by a doctor that they should stay away from work.

Please discuss this with your manager. You may broadly follow the process outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups to discuss mitigating strategies. While options are being considered, you may be 'rostered but not required to attend work'. Where no suitable deployment options are available, you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 rostered shifts, or until suitable deployment options are available, whichever is sooner. If you choose, you may then access carer's leave, recreation and/or long service leave. After this, you may apply for leave without pay.

Vulnerability

16. I have identified as a vulnerable person for COVID-19 (per the criteria outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups). What arrangements should be considered?

Please discuss this with your manager and follow the process outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups. While discussions are occurring and mitigating strategies are being considered, you may be 'rostered but not required to attend work'. Where no suitable deployment options are available, you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 rostered shifts, or until suitable deployment options are available, whichever is sooner. If you choose, you may then access your sick leave, recreation and/or long service leave. After this, you may apply for leave without pay.

17. I do not fall into a vulnerable category for COVID-19 (per the criteria outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups), however I have medical advice that supports I should not work in a hospital setting. What arrangements should be considered?

Please discuss this with your manager and follow the process outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups. While discussions are occurring and mitigating strategies are being considered, you may be 'rostered but not required to attend work'. Where no suitable deployment options are available, you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 rostered shifts, or until suitable deployment options are available, whichever is sooner. If you choose, you may then access your sick leave, recreation and/or long service leave. After this, you may apply for leave without pay. Matters will be considered on a case by case basis.

18. A household member falls within a vulnerable category for COVID-19 (per the criteria outlined in the COVID-19 Guidance Note for Staff in Vulnerable Groups) and I feel uncomfortable working in a hospital setting. What arrangements should be considered?

Please discuss this with your manager as matters will be assessed on a case by case basis. Flexible work options (work from home or from another hub) should be discussed. If no suitable options are available, deployment options may be considered, initially through EOC-MetroNorth. Where no suitable deployment options are available, you may choose to apply for recreation and/or long service leave. After this, you may apply for leave without pay.

Workplace arrangements

19. What do I need to do if I am required to work from home?

Team members who are able to work from home or an alternative work site may be requested or encouraged to do so by their line manager as Metro North responds to the evolving pandemic. In this event, you will be provided with information to set up remote access to work systems such as Office 365.

You should also discuss with your line manager any workplace health and safety considerations with reference to the Telecommuting safety checklist (https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0035/2288069/fwa-telecommute-checklist.pdf) and document the dates of the working from home arrangement and the expectations of the work tasks you will complete. You will also need to ensure you manage confidential information appropriately. If working from home, standard hours for your normal day or your normal shift apply. Please refer to the [Flexible Work Arrangements](#) fact sheet for more information.

20. I'm worried that I might be exposed to COVID-19 in my work area. What can I do?

Your health, wellbeing and safety is of paramount importance. Please discuss any concerns with your line manager. It's important to be vigilant in practising good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene. Ensure you

adhere to local droplet precautionary procedures at all times. PPE will be made available in line with standard policy where a risk of exposure to COVID-19 has been identified.

Preapproved recreation and/or long service leave

21. I have upcoming annual leave and/or long service booked. Can I cancel my leave?

Please discuss this with your manager. Given current travel restrictions, employee requests to cancel leave should not be unreasonably refused.

22. I am on annual leave and/or long service leave and am currently overseas, unable to return home. What arrangements should be considered?

You can apply for further annual leave and long service leave. Once your annual leave and long service is exhausted, you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 shifts. You may then apply for leave without pay.

23. I returned from overseas to Australia after midnight 15 March 2020 based on the advice of the Australian Government. I was on annual leave and/or long service leave. Can I cancel my leave from 16 March 2020 for the duration of the self-quarantine period? Can I continue my leave after my 14 day self-quarantine period ends?

If you have returned to Australia after 15 March 2020, you are required to self-quarantine for 14 days. You may request to cancel any leave that was previously approved which falls within this 14-day period. If you are well, your manager should discuss whether working from home is a suitable option during this period. Where it is not suitable for you to work from home, you may apply for paid special leave (up to 14 calendar days) for your self-quarantine period. Supporting documentation is required for all periods of paid special leave which may include evidence of your travel such as an airline ticket.

If at the conclusion of your self-quarantine period, you had previously approved leave past this date, you may wish to remain on leave. Alternatively, you may wish to request to cancel the remainder of your leave period. Given current travel restrictions, employee requests to cancel leave should not be unreasonably refused.

24. One of my team members wants to go overseas.

Employees will need to make their own choices as to whether they choose to travel internationally at this time. Employees are to submit a leave application through the usual local area process. Upon their return mandatory self-quarantine requirements will apply.

25. Can I cancel/defer a team member's preapproved leave or recall a team member from annual leave and/or long service leave to meet service delivery needs, what are my obligations?

Employees should not be financially disadvantaged if their leave is cancelled by their employer. Please refer to the [Recall, Deferral or Cancellation of Leave](#) fact sheet.

Other

26. Public transport has closed and I have no other means to get to work.

Flexible work options (including work from home or from another hub) should be discussed with your line manager. While this is being considered, you may be 'rostered but not required to attend work'. Where this is not suitable you may apply for Special Paid Leave (*non-discretionary leave in a disaster*) for up to 14 rostered shifts. You may choose to apply for recreation and/or long service leave. After this, you may apply for leave without pay.

27. I am a casual employee. Do these leave provisions apply to me?

Casual employees may be granted up to 20 days paid Special Pandemic Leave. This includes projected roster earnings for an self-isolation period – including shift allowances, weekend penalties, but not overtime. Your pattern of work will be considered in determining how many days you would be able to claim.

28. I'm a shift worker and normally get paid shift allowance and weekend penalties. If I have to take paid special leave because of COVID-19, how will I be compensated for this?

The Special Pandemic Leave provides for 'regular remuneration' if you need to take paid special leave because of COVID-19. Regular remuneration means ordinary salary including work related allowances and penalties, and includes payments based on a projected roster where applicable. You will not be compensated for any loss of overtime.

29. Can I get my Special Pandemic Leave paid in advance?

No, Special Pandemic Leave is paid through normal pay cycles, where possible.

30. What happens if I exhaust all my entitlements?

Please discuss this with your manager. You may apply for leave without pay in these instances. You may also wish to consider pursuing other avenues outside your employment relationship, including contacting your superannuation provider to query your ability to access "income protection" and/or the Department of Human Services for financial support.

*The close contact definition in the CDNA National Guidelines is complex but includes face to face contact for more than 15 minutes or sharing a closed space for a prolonged period (e.g. more than 2 hours) with a confirmed or probable case, in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms in the confirmed or probable case. For further detail including close contact definitions for the purposes of surveillance, refer to the CDNA National Guidelines found via the weblink on the Metro north COVID-19 Website.

Additionally, regularly updated information about COVID-19, infection trends and responses from a Metro North perspective can be found [here](#) on QHEPs.

For further information and advice on responding to or managing COVID-19 related issues affecting your team members' or your employment in your current situation, please contact the HR team directly through:

Email: MetroNorthHR@health.qld.gov.au or by calling 3647-2819.

You can also access the Pandemic Leave Directive [here](#).

At all times, [Benestar](#), our Metro North Employee Assistance Service is available for support should you need it.

Please note that Fact Sheets and supporting information will be regularly updated to respond to emerging circumstances and information. Please note, once printed, this document may no longer be current and you should recheck information through the Metro North COVID 19 Intranet page at <https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/metronorth/coronavirus>