

Department of Family and Community Services – Christmas Closedown 2018/19

The PSA encourages all members to regularly take recreation leave for their own health and well-being. For non-frontline staff, the Christmas closedown will take place between Monday, 24 December 2018 and Friday, 4 January 2019 inclusive.

If you are a frontline staff member you are exempted

Frontline services do not shut down over the Christmas closedown and services such as child protection must remain open.

FACS managers need to discuss and consult with their teams to ensure adequate staffing levels. If they haven't already done so, managers should be holding discussions with staff now. With a common sense approach and sufficient notice of leave plans, it would be hoped that those who wish to take leave can and those who plan to keep working can do so.

Where frontline staff are denied leave for operational reasons but it is clear that the office will be adequately staffed over Christmas/New Year, members should contact their delegates or the Member Support Centre for advice.

If you are a non-frontline staff member, here are the facts:

Can I work during the closedown period?

While the NSW Government encourages all non-frontline areas to shut down, you are not obligated to take recreation leave over this two-week period. Nor are staff required to present a justification or 'business case' to explain why they wish to keep working.

Unless you can be directed to take leave (see below), it is your choice whether you work or not.

If your manager advises that your branch will close down, a reasonable alternative work arrangement must be made available for you. This could include a temporary assignment to another branch that is not closing down for the period or working from home for some or all of the time. Remember, the State Government keeps telling us about their commitment to flexible work.

You may have to work at a different location, but you cannot be expected to travel unreasonable distances and you may be entitled to be reimbursed for the additional costs of travel.

Can I be directed to take recreation leave due to the closedown?

You can be directed to take recreation leave only if you have an 'excess' leave balance:

- » If you have accrued eight weeks' (40 days) recreation leave, you can be directed to take two weeks' leave sometime within six weeks of being notified of the excess leave balance
- » If you have accrued 6-8 weeks' (30-40 days) recreation leave, you can be directed to take two weeks' leave sometime within the following three months after the original notification.

This accords with the Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award 2009 – clauses 77.2.3 & 77.2.4. Other than these particular circumstances, you cannot be directed to take recreation leave.

If you need assistance, please contact your PSA delegates or call the Member Support Centre on **1300 772 679**.

