

## COVID 19 Corrective Services Update

**Up to date: Thursday 5pm 26 March 2020**

### Communications from COVID Command Centre

The Department and the union are investing significant resources to try and keep COVID exposure in our workplaces as minimal as possible through the establishment of a COVID Command Centre. This Command Centre is providing daily updates and progressively issuing instructions and COVID specific procedures, and also operates 24 hours to assist resolving COVID incidents. The Commissioner has asked for all Governors to distribute these communications to all their staff. The Union has asked for a COVID coordinator in all centres to assist all staff in managing the COVID 19 risks. If you are not getting updates, contact your PSA delegates. The PSA will not distribute these instructions as we want to avoid distributing mistakenly classified information externally, when there is now significant volume of materials being developed. The PSA are also asking for all Coronavirus Command communications to be put on the intranet page to assist staff become aware of measures being taken.

### Section 26 and 6.2s

There should be communications coming out from the Commissioner on these types of orders.

### Advice on testing- Good News

We are yet to see the official advice on the health department website, however the National Cabinet last night (Wed) provided amended advice that priority testing for COVID19 has been

extended to people involved in high risk communities (this includes corrections and youth justice) who suffer respiratory symptoms. This is good news for all Corrective Services and Youth Justice staff, as rather than being forced to go into a number of rounds of 14 day self-isolation as workers get exposed to more and more people with confirmed COVID19, they will now be able to access the swab test and get results within days (current testing speed is within days but expected to become faster), reducing unnecessary leave and reducing pressure on our workmates who will have to fill the void in testing times.

### Movement Logs

There is agreement with the Department that all movements will be logged to enable better contact tracing in the event of infection within the system. Whilst this is extra work, the importance of this task is essential in the case of infection, and further isolation to prevent COVID19 disbursement.

### Frequently Asked Questions- Social Distancing

Corrective Services and Youth Justice are currently exempted from the social distancing requirements under NSW Health Orders. However, under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the Department is required to eliminate and then minimise risks to workers health and safety. We are all however, aware of the corrections environment is a high risk environment for this contagious pandemic influenza, and that staff pose one of the more significant risks of bringing the virus into correctional workplaces. Social



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Distancing may be a key strategy to maintain worker safety and to maintain business continuity in the case of an infection in the custodial environment. Therefore we are recommending the following in line with federal and state health recommendations whilst trying to maintain 4 square meter spaces where possible:

- » All security procedures should be followed as a priority in safety over infection safety measures due to the larger risk involved with inmates in custody.
- » If required to undertake security measures that put you at risk of infection, appropriate PPE should be provided.
- » Review local procedures to avoid unnecessary exposure where possible, including through amendment of risks no longer necessary in consultation with your management.
- » That all non-essential meetings utilise social distancing or digital communication to avoid risk of infection.
- » That all communications such as daily parades are assessed as to whether alternate mechanisms can be used, factoring in social distancing recommendations, location, and also alternate means of communications (i.e. notices in sterile gate radio room, or addressing Managers/ Seniors for them to address team staff and emailing all staff).
- » If you are suffering respiratory symptoms- do not go to work!
- » Look at whether staff rotations between different wings (such as cyclic rostering)

can be amended to avoid potential exposure to different contained areas.

- » For non-custodial staff look at creating teams of staff and not having them not physically in the same space or utilise working from home arrangements.
- » Regularly undertake hygiene measures such as cleaning hands.
- » All workplaces should be increasing their cleaning regime.

PSA met with Corrective Services on Thursday afternoon and discussed program delivery and working from home arrangements for Non Custodial staff. There will be instructions coming from Corrective Services guiding programs staff on social distancing this week and also increasing clarity and guidance for working from home next week.

### Frequently Asked Questions- Workers Compensation and COVID 19

The union and the Department have worked on mechanisms to get special leave for all workers affected by COVID 19 under the [Premiers Circular 2020-01](#). This support with your Medicare system (which unions also fought for and won) should provide most workers with their immediate health and income needs. There are however, concerns for PSA members if they do get infected, that the recovery time for COVID19 can be longer for some people than just a few weeks. Doctors have been reporting cases overseas state that a small number of patients have experienced lung scarring and delayed recovery. There is **no uniform answer for whether workers compensation will cover workers in every situation**. There is a



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legal requirement for liability to be accepted under [Workers Compensation Act 1987](#), that a causal nexus must exist between work and the injury/illness, and for diseases liability that the illness was acquired in the course of work and work was the main contributing factor. Therefore by maintaining a movement log (as above), this may assist members undertake contact tracing as required from NSW Health and may have the advantage of assisting to prove workers compensation liability in the circumstance when other leave is exhausted and a member needs the assistance.

Your PSA contacts on the 7-day COVID 19 Command Centre are:

### Non Custodial

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### COVB

Darren Wells- COVB Chair- Shortland CC

### POVB

Amanda Cotter- POVB Secretary- Goulburn CC

Nicole Jess – POVB Chair- PSA Vice President- Silverwater Womens CC

Natalie Howes- Country Vice Chair – Oberon CC

