

COVID-19:

Information for procurers of cleaning services



Current as of 6 August 2020

Large businesses have a key role to play in limiting the economic and human rights effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As procurers of cleaning services, either as tenants or landlords of buildings, large businesses hold considerable power to minimise the negative impact of this public health crisis for some of the most vulnerable workers in Australia.

Large companies have an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility during this pandemic by ensuring that cleaners, some of the most vulnerable workers in their operations and supply chains, are treated with respect for the crucial work they do to provide safe and hygienic environments and their frontline role in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

This info sheet outlines best practice approaches to respecting cleaners' rights in your supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why does this matter?

Cleaners are frontline workers in the pandemic and the nexus between quality cleaning and decent work has never been stronger. Providing fair working conditions for cleaners is critical to ensuring a COVID-19 safe Australia.

Most cleaners are low-paid workers on temporary work visas living pay cheque to pay cheque. If their capacity to work is affected by the pandemic, they will be in an extremely precarious financial position, unable to access income support and with poor access to healthcare if they need it.



Quality cleaning can only be delivered by a cleaning workforce that is treated with respect. In practice, this means compliance with minimum legal standards around wages and entitlements, high workplace health and safety standards, and an environment in which cleaners are empowered to speak up when they experience dangerous or substandard conditions in their workplace.

In practice, what can procurers of cleaning services do to protect cleaners in their supply chains?

Where cleaning scopes are increased:

- Work with your cleaning contractor to ensure adequate hours and resources are allocated to meet your cleaning needs – this may require a variation to the current cleaning contract.
- Work with your cleaning contractor to ensure cleaners feel safe at work. This may be for example through the provision of additional PPE on request, regular communication with cleaners, additional training on WHS matters etc.

Where cleaning needs are reduced:

- **Best-practice:** Do not cut hours from cleaning contracts – maintaining service provision will ensure that cleaners, most of whom are ineligible for JobKeeper and JobSeeker due to their visa status, will be able to keep their job and livelihood. Responsible owners and tenants are taking advantage of low occupancy to task their cleaners with detail cleaning and placing a focus on high touchpoint cleaning to ensure that workplaces remain as safe and hygienic as possible.
- **Best practice:** Continue to pay for the wages of cleaners who are ineligible for JobKeeper due to their visa status during the period of reduced cleaning scope.
- At a minimum, set the expectation with your cleaning service provider that cleaners who are ineligible for JobKeeper or JobSeeker due to their visa status be retained to work on site, while those cleaners who are eligible for the wage subsidy or income support be stood down. This will ensure that all the cleaners will be able to survive this difficult period with some income.
- Provide your cleaning service provider with the [CAF Contractor Infosheet](#) and advise them to provide all of their employees with the [CAF Cleaner Factsheet](#).
- Detailed guidance on how to ensure ethical business conduct in relation to service reductions is available to CAF members at stakeholders at CAF-certified buildings, contact info@cleaningaccountability.org.au to receive the latest version.

For buildings in Victoria:

- Cleaning contractors may have additional requests for PPE in light of the government's decision to make masks mandatory.
- Cleaners and other workers may be eligible for [financial support](#) from the government in the event they need to get tested for COVID-19 and isolate (\$300 test isolation payment and a \$1500/fortnight worker support payment). Make sure that the cleaning contractor is providing up to date information to their employees about these payments and how to access them if they need to.

In any situation, make sure that:

- Cleaners are fully informed of what is happening at their workplace, including having access to COVID-safe plans;
- Cleaners have safe working conditions;
- Cleaners are able to take paid sick leave when they need to;
- Cleaners are able to take paid (preferably) or unpaid pandemic leave;
- Cleaners are able to speak up if they experience dangerous or substandard working conditions.

If you are a member of CAF, and/or if you are a stakeholder at a CAF certified building, we are here to assist you with any further guidance. Please contact the relevant certification adviser or email us at info@cleaningaccountability.org.au

More information is available via the following resources:

- [Resources for migrant workers](#)
- [Stand-down employer checklist](#)
- [Safe Work Australia](#)
- [Our COVID-19 resource webpage](#) will be updated regularly, so keep checking in for up to date information.