

COVID-19:

Information for cleaners

Current as of 22 July 2021



Cleaners are frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, working hard to keep buildings clean and safe for members of the public. You play an important role in helping to reduce the spread of the virus.

CAF exists to uphold cleaners' labour rights. Cleaning contractors, building managers, and building owners at CAF-certified buildings are committed to providing fair pay and safe working conditions to cleaners.

This factsheet provides information about questions you may have about your job and your rights in the context of COVID-19, what options you have if you are affected by this crisis, and where to go for assistance.

Financial help for workers during the COVID-19 pandemic

If you have been directly affected by lockdowns in COVID-19 hotspots or you cannot work because you've been asked by health officials to self-isolate or quarantine, you may be able to access [financial support](#).

All workers with an eligible working visa, **including migrant workers on temporary visas**, in all states across Australia, can now access these disaster payments. **To apply, phone 180 22 66.**

Your employer should be able to provide more information if you have any questions about what financial support you can access. Your union, [United Workers Union](#), can also provide more detailed guidance on how to apply for different payments.

If you are a migrant worker in financial distress, check out our page on [financial resources for migrant workers](#).

Personal leave

If you are unable to work due to Coronavirus for example if you have to self-isolate or care for someone who has COVID-19, you are entitled to take paid personal (sick) leave if you are permanent or fixed term and you have accrued personal leave. You are entitled to take unpaid personal leave if you are a casual.

If you need to self-isolate but do not have any personal leave, you can access the [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#) by calling 180 22 66.

If you are in Victoria and need to get tested for COVID-19 and isolate, you may be eligible for [financial support](#) from the government (\$450 Coronavirus Test Isolation Payment).

You cannot be fired because of a [temporary absence from work due to illness](#).

Check with your employer and your [union](#) if you have any questions about taking paid or unpaid leave if you or someone you care for has Coronavirus or you are required to self-isolate.

Safe working conditions

Your employer must ensure that you have a safe work environment at all times.



Some building owners are following best-practice and keeping regular cleaning hours, however there may be cuts to hours at your workplace which may have an impact on your weekly hours and income. Your employer should consult with you before reducing your working hours and ensure that hours are distributed fairly amongst staff.

Can I be stood down without pay?

Yes. According to Australian [workplace law](#), employers are able to stand employees down, without pay, during a period in which an employee cannot usefully be employed because of situations including “a stoppage of work for any cause for which the employer cannot reasonably be held responsible.”

During a stand-down, you remain employed, although you are not required to perform work and you are not paid during the period of the stand-down. You will, however, continue to accrue annual leave and personal leave entitlements while you are stood down. You must also be paid for public holidays during the stand down period.

Your employer will inform you when you can return to work at the end of the stand down, and should keep you regularly updated in the meantime.

Can I take annual leave or long service leave?

If you are not eligible for government income support, taking annual leave or long service might also be an option. Ask your employer if you can use your annual leave if you have an accrued entitlement.

Note: your employer cannot force you to take annual leave if you do not want to. See the ‘For more information’ section at the end of this factsheet for information about portable long service leave.

If you need to self-isolate, you can access the \$1500/fortnight [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#).

What is CAF doing to protect cleaners at this time?

- Monitoring workplace health and safety conditions at CAF-certified buildings
- Encouraging building owners and managers to maintain cleaning service provision so that your employer can keep you employed

This includes providing you with the personal protective equipment (PPE) you need to do your job safely, including:

- disposable gloves,
- masks,
- easy access to water and soap and hand sanitisers,
- supplies of chemicals and cleaning materials including regularly washed or disposable cloths, disinfectant,
- safe workloads, and
- quality training on how to do your job safely.

If you believe your safety is at risk, talk to your employer and/or your [union](#).

Reduced work opportunities and income

Many businesses are being affected by government measures to contain COVID-19. This means that office buildings and shopping centres may have fewer cleaning requirements which can mean cleaners will lose hours, be asked to take annual leave, or be stood down without pay.

- Advising tenants to maintain cleaning service provision so that your employer can keep you employed
- Advising your employer to provide a safe work environment, to consult with you on any changes to rosters, cuts to hours or in the event of shut down.
- Consulting with your union, United Workers Union, on measures to support you during this unprecedented event.

If you want to report any workplace issues to CAF relating to COVID-19

Complete the CAF Coronavirus [survey](#). We will leave this survey open throughout the duration of the COVID-19 crisis and provide regular reports to your employer, the building manager, and the building owner. Your response to the survey will be treated confidentially. You can complete the survey more than once, if your working conditions change.

You can also contact [United Workers Union](#) if you have any questions or concerns.

For more information

The Fair Work Ombudsman has provided some [guidance](#) around your workplace rights regarding COVID-19.

United Workers Union has a factsheet on [supports and services](#) during COVID-19.

Contact [United Workers Union](#) if you have any questions about your rights during COVID-19 and for assistance with legal matters.

If COVID-19 is creating issues with your visa conditions, you can access **free immigration advice and visa service** from Unions NSW and the Immigration Advice and Rights Centre [here](#).

SBS has information about COVID-19 in Australia in 63 different languages, you can stay up to date [here](#).