

26 November 2021

Greg Rayner
Divisional Secretary
Communication Workers' Union
Level 9, 365 Queen St
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By Email: Greg.Rayner@cwu.org.au

Dear Greg,

Australia Post Pandemic (COVID-19) Leave Policy

As you know, the safety of our people is our number one priority at Australia Post, and since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic over 18 months ago, we have made every effort to keep our people, customers and communities safe. We are extremely grateful for the support of the CWU over this period and together, our collective efforts have kept workplace transmission within Australia Post's facilities to an absolute minimum during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, Australia Post was one of the first employers in Australia to introduce paid pandemic leave. Our Pandemic (COVID-19) Leave Policy (**Pandemic Leave Policy**) was introduced on 17 March 2020, less than one week after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation.

Since this time, we have supported over 7,600 team members to access this additional paid pandemic leave entitlement, at a cost of over \$7.75 million. Similarly, in 2020 Australia Post spent around \$20 million on COVID-19 controls including PCR testing onsite, Rapid Antigen Testing, Smart Badges and other personal protective equipment (PPE) to make sure we are keeping our people safe. We are on track to spend another \$14 million in 2021.

The purpose of the Pandemic Leave Policy has always been to help our people manage the impacts that may be experienced due to COVID-19, and to support team members who are unable to attend for work due to the operation of various government guidelines and directions that require isolation and testing. In short, Australia Post's Pandemic Leave Policy has always aimed to put team members in a similar position that they would have been in, had they been able to attend work as normal in the absence of government directions.

We have continued to review our Pandemic Leave Policy in line with regular changes to state and federal COVID-19 requirements. As Australians enter the next phase of living with COVID-19, it is clear that vaccination is the most effective control measure available to minimise transmission and severity of COVID-19, and we are continuing to encourage all team members to get vaccinated by providing paid time off work for this purpose. It is encouraging that as of today's date, 86% of eligible Australians over the age of 16 are now double vaccinated.

In light of the evolving landscape with respect to COVID-19 as set out above, we have held a number of discussions with the CWU regarding our most recent amendments our Pandemic Leave Policy to limit eligibility to only those who are fully vaccinated (and who have declared that they are fully vaccinated to Australia Post). We acknowledge the CWU's strong opposition to this change, and we have given

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consideration to the CWU's contention that confining the application of the Pandemic Leave Policy to fully vaccinated employees amounts, in practice, to a requirement for mandatory vaccination. We do not share this view, and while Australia Post encourages vaccination, at this stage we have not made vaccination a mandatory requirement for our existing workforce.

In the course of our discussions with the CWU, you have also requested a further review of the Pandemic Leave Policy to include a new form of paid leave for team members who contract COVID-19. We have subsequently undertaken a further review of the Pandemic Leave Policy at your request.

Since its introduction, the Pandemic Leave Policy has provided for payments to be made to eligible employees in circumstances where they have been prevented from attending for work as a result of government COVID-19 requirements, such as mandatory quarantine periods. Separate to this Pandemic Leave Policy, Australia Post provides 15 days of personal/carer's leave per annum, which accrues from year to year. This is higher than the 10 days of personal/carer's leave prescribed by the National Employment Standards. Given this, Australia Post does not propose to introduce further paid leave in addition to the 15 days of personal/carer's leave per annum at this stage, but we will continue to review the Pandemic Leave Policy as COVID-19 continues to impact our workforce.

Where an employee finds themselves in a position of financial hardship due to the impacts of COVID-19, Australia Post remains willing to provide appropriate support based on individual circumstances, and as always, we are prepared to discuss these circumstances with the CWU in respect of their members.

We are grateful for the support of the CWU in helping to maintain safe workplaces for our team members as we have navigated through the uncertainty and complexity of COVID 19. And while we may not always be in agreement about how to respond to the challenges that COVID 19 presents, Australia Post is committed to working constructively and in a consultative way with you and the CWU.

Yours sincerely,



Geraldine Rivers

General Manager, Employee Relations