



COVID-19 update – Special Pandemic Leave

The health and safety of staff and clients is our top priority

19 March 2020

Gamba daru Colleagues

As we watch the COVID-19 situation develop around us, and take our own measures at State Library to be prepared for an uncertain future, I am well aware that this will be an anxious time for some of our staff, particularly as it relates to pay and leave arrangements.

I am working closely with the Executive Team and your senior managers to ensure that our staff are supported to the best possible extent. I also have regular discussions with the Chair of the Library Board to update him on how we are responding to the situation. This week, I have also had two discussions with Minister Enoch to outline our response. She very much values the work that we are doing to continue to provide services to Queenslanders.

Special Pandemic Leave

I am pleased to advise that the State Government has now released a new [Directive 1/20 Employment Arrangements in the Event of a Health Pandemic \(Directive\)](#). This Directive provides staff with an additional leave type – **Special Pandemic Leave** – a maximum of 20 days. This Special Pandemic Leave is available for use when an employee is unable to attend work and unable to perform work under flexible working arrangement because they;

- have an actual viral infection and have exhausted their sick leave accruals; and/or
- are required to care for immediate family or household member/s who have an actual or suspected viral infection and have exhausted their sick leave (carer's leave) accruals; and/or
- are required to care for children as a result of school or childcare centres closures and have exhausted their sick leave (carer's leave) accruals.

Other leave entitlements

The Directive offers other leave entitlements. Where a health pandemic requires an employee to self-isolate in accordance with health advice and the employee is not sick, and they are not able to undertake flexible work arrangements, the employee may apply for Special Leave. An employee may also be able to apply for early access to pro-rata long service leave, regardless of length of service, when all other paid leave accruals have been exhausted.

Entitlements for casuals

I am well aware that COVID-19 impacts our casual staff significantly. Our casual workforce is a much valued part of State Library, and I am keen to ensure our staff are not financially disadvantaged through loss of work through this crisis. Additionally we will make every effort to ensure that we retain their skills and experience over the coming months, where possible.

The new Directive provides clear entitlement to Special Paid Leave for casual staff in the event they or family members are directly impacted by COVID-19, including school closures or public transport suspensions, however the Directive limits that entitlement to casuals who have performed systematic patterns of work for at least 12 months, and does not specify compensation for lost casual work – e.g. when forthcoming events are cancelled or in the event the State Library closes to the public.

As State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer, I have the discretion to administratively apply these conditions, and contemplate further compensation through special leave as set out in Directive 05/17 Special Leave.

With this in mind, if the State Library is not able to offer paid work during the pandemic period, casual employees who, regardless of length of service, have performed a systematic pattern of employment, and we are reasonably satisfied would have continued to do so under business as usual conditions, will continue to be paid through 'paid special leave'.

This policy will be applied to the extent of the previously approved forward budget for each work area and specific project. We will need to determine how this will be applied to each individual casual worker (e.g. based on forward roster or average earnings over recent times if there is no regular roster to rely upon) and we will work with People Leaders to gather data from CAA and internally to make these calls and advise affected staff ASAP. Please be patient while we work through this detail.

Supporting documentation

Employees are to provide supporting evidence for all periods of absence on Special Pandemic Leave. Supporting evidence may include;

- a medical certificate; or
- a copy of a record to confirm they (or their family member) has undergone a relevant assessment; or
- other documentation or advice that a State Library EMT member considers as being acceptable evidence to support the absence.

I understand that this an uncertain time for everyone. I encourage you to support each other. If you have any concerns please discuss them with your People Leader. Over the years, State Library staff have demonstrated great resilience and teamwork in challenging times. I am confident that our response to this unprecedented global challenge will be no different. Thank you for your support.

Regards, Vicki

Useful links

- State Library Staff Updates - <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/staffupdates>
- [Directive 01/20: Employment Arrangements in the Event of a Health Pandemic](#)
- [Implementation Guide – Directive 01/20](#), includes a flow-chart to assist in determining key employee entitlements.
- [Directive 06/17: Special Leave](#)
- [Employee assistance service](#)

Gamba daru

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"Gamba daru" means "Good day" in the language of the Barunnggam people from the Darling Downs region of Dalby and Bunya Mountains – the community where I grew up. You can learn more about the traditional owners in your area using the [Indigenous Languages Map of Queensland](#) and then [find out how to say G'day](#) in the traditional language of the area.

2019 was the [UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages](#).