

From: Bevan Warner
Sent: Sunday, 22 March 2020 9:02 PM
To: LH All Staff <LHAllStaff@launchhousing.org.au>
Subject: Shut down: what does it mean

Dear colleague

Some of you will have heard or woken up to news of a shutdown of all non-essential activity across the State effective from Tuesday 24th March. You may be wondering what this means for you and your job and your family. There are some things we do know and I want to respond with some immediate guidance.

Am I expected to work

Yes, we are planning on the basis that homelessness services will be considered an 'essential service' like health and policing. This means that we are finalising readiness plans to continue working. If this doesn't eventuate we will let you know.

We know the Covid-19 outbreak is unprecedented. It has prompted a state of emergency and that all citizens are expected to take steps to act in their own and in the public interest. This includes practicing good hygiene, social distancing and observing any lock down laws restricting movement that may be promulgated in the future. We also know that many of our clients have low health immunity, that some will have difficulties complying and that their vulnerabilities will increase as other service systems retreat from them. At times like these we need to stick together and practice our values. Consideration of homelessness services as an essential service is consistent with our values and the vulnerabilities of our clients, but it does demand more from us than many others in the community. This is something we can all be proud of.

We also know the Covid-19 outbreak will impact productivity and that we need to narrow our focus to what's truly important, so please don't stress about targets or deliverables. Everything is being re-scoped, just do your best and when in doubt ask your Manager. We are telling Managers to individualise their support and to concentrate on essentials. We will also be refining a list of services we won't compromise and will be asking staff to voluntarily consider rostering themselves for shifts in these services, should these services experience critical staff shortages.

We are all human and these unusual times can place pressures on relationships and cause angst for children and loved ones. If you need materials to explain why we are working or what steps we are taking to make work safe then let us know. We don't want work to be any more difficult than it already is.

School closures

The Premier has also announced that schools will close from Tuesday 24th March. For those of you with school aged children you may have planned annual leave over the school holidays already. Please continue with those plans. I also appreciate that you may now find yourself in a situation where those you care for may be home for longer periods than planned, and your usual support mechanisms such as grandparents and school holiday programs may not be available to you. Please feel comfortable to access your paid leave entitlements including personal, annual, wellbeing and long service leave during this time.

You may be working remotely, or in home based work now. Realistically, should you have to care for school aged children, it is unlikely that you will be able to work as usual. I understand that and want to support you during this time. Please have a conversation with your manager about what you can

reasonably manage and take that fraction of time as paid work and the balance as extended leave. All changes to working arrangements must be done in agreement with line managers and recorded through PANDO. Please don't overcommit yourself, your health and well-being is too important.

Rostered days off and annual leave

If you do not have caring responsibilities and your team will be short staffed, I ask you to consider whether you might postpone RDO's or booked leave. This is not a request I make lightly. I understand that for some it will not be possible, so be reassured that there is no recrimination for those staff who do proceed with leave and RDO's as planned. This is a request for flexibility and support of teams you may not be a member of. If you have the skills to support front line staff, and it is possible within your own team and your own workload commitments, to step into a front line role please discuss this with your Manager. We are asking staff to be generous with their skills so we can maintain critical support for clients.

Leave guidance

Below is a table offering guidance on a range of common questions around leave during this time:

Scenario	Advice
Do I need to provide a medical certificate for personal leave?	Launch Housing don't wish to add to the pressure on medical service providers. Where it is not possible to reasonably get a medical certificate a statutory declaration will be acceptable
You are directed by Launch Housing to self-isolate	You will be paid and won't be required to access your personal leave entitlements
You are returning from overseas travel and need to self-isolate for fourteen days	You will need to make arrangements to access leave, or if possible, working from home arrangements for the fourteen day exclusion period
You feel too anxious to attend work	You should access your leave. The services of the Employee Assistance Program are also available to support you
You have caring responsibilities, including the care of children home from school because of a school lock down	You should access personal leave to provide care for your family. You may also access any other paid leave entitlements during this time
You have used all available paid leave and are sick or have carers responsibility	If you have used all your available paid leave entitlements, including annual leave, wellbeing, personal and long service leave, you will be allowed to go into a negative balance of up to ten days
You are a casual employee and have no sick leave	If you are rostered on for shifts which you cannot attend because you have become sick then you may access up to ten days of paid personal leave entitlement
What if I have used all of my leave and am experiencing hardship	Exceptions to this advice will be considered on a case by case basis

What if I don't want to attend work during this time?

Some staff may not wish to attend to work, either from an office or from home during this time. These staff will be required to access their leave entitlements. Launch is committed to continuing to provide services to our clients for as long as possible and we require minimum levels of staffing to make this possible. Please work closely with your line managers to respond to your particular

circumstances and seek the help and support you may need to feel comfortable to continue in your role.

Highlights

There are a few points I would like to highlight for you, including some good news!

- Launch Housing Funding – Many businesses are losing money and laying off staff but one advantage of being so heavily reliant on government grants is that they can be relied upon when you need them. Although there will be pressure in the future we have been assured that we can adapt our existing revenue base to adapt to the times to continue to deliver services that are needed.
- The Government is temporarily expanding eligibility to income support payments and establishing a new, six-month supplement to be paid at a rate of \$550 per fortnight. This will be paid to existing and new recipients of the Job Seeker Payment, Youth Allowance jobseeker, Parenting Payment and Special Benefit. Eligible income support recipients will receive the full amount of the \$550 Coronavirus supplement on top of their payment each fortnight. The first payment will be made from 31 March 2020. It also means that some of our more vulnerable and high dependency clients will have more money in their pocket.
- The Government has been working to ensure priority access to groceries for vulnerable Australians and Launch Housing will be eligible to seek priority access for our clients and further details of this service will be forthcoming.
- On another brighter note, feedback from Dandenong and Southbank has been that it has become easier to pre-purchase motel accommodation and to arrange safe haven for rough sleepers and that many clients have been assisted in this way with the extra money we have received since the Covid-19 outbreak reduced and occupancy rates in our hotels and motels.

Employee Assistance Program

The employee assistance program is available to you during this time and I encourage you to access them if you are experiencing stress and anxiety at the moment. I've used them. Talking to a professional is helpful. It helps just to say what's bothering you out loud. The number for this free and confidential service is 1300 364 273.

We have all been so heartened by the amazing efforts of our staff who have stepped up, suddenly changing their roles or restructuring how their services will be delivered, in order to maintain support to our clients. Leadership comes in all shapes and sizes and in a variety of ways. We are proud and humbled to have our formal leadership roles. By staying focussed on clients and our values we will make it through this tough time - stronger - together.

From the Senior Leadership Team

We believe everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to call home. Homelessness is an experience not an identity. We know that paths to homelessness are varied and that it can be fixed.

We are proud to be an inclusive organisation and support all efforts to build a more equal world, where individuals can live and work free from discrimination. We especially respect the contribution and enduring connection of First Nations peoples to our land and society, and urge all Australians to embrace the Uluru statement from the heart and what it asks of us.



Please consider our environment before printing this email.