



COVID-19: TEMPORARY NEW AWARD PROVISIONS

On 8 April 2020, the Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission decided to vary [99 awards](#) including the *Vehicle Manufacturing Repair Services and Retail Award 2010* and the *Clerks – Private Sector Award 2010* in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The temporary variations will apply until 30 June 2020 (unless extended).

A new “Schedule X: Additional measures during the COVID-19 pandemic” will be added to the selected awards. Schedule X provides an entitlement to unpaid ‘pandemic leave’ and the flexibility to take twice as much annual leave at half pay (see below).

Schedule X—Additional measures during the COVID-19 pandemic

X.1 Subject to clauses X.2.1.(d) and X.2.2(c), Schedule X operates from 8 April 2020 until 30 June 2020. The period of operation can be extended on application.

X.2 During the operation of Schedule X, the following provisions apply:

X.2.1 Unpaid pandemic leave

(a) Subject to clauses X.2.1(b), and (c) and (d), any employee is entitled to take up to 2 weeks’ unpaid leave if the employee is required, by government or medical authorities or acting on the advice of a medical practitioner to self-isolate and is consequently prevented from working, or is otherwise prevented from working by measures taken by government or medical authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(b) The employee must give their employer notice of the taking of leave under clause X.2.1(a) and of the reason the employee requires the leave, as soon as practicable (which may be a time after the leave has started).

(c) An employee who has given their employer notice of taking leave under clause X.2.1(a) must, if required by the employer, give the employer evidence that would satisfy a reasonable person that the leave is taken for a reason given in clause X.2.1(a).

(d) A period of leave under clause X.2.1(a) must start before 30 June 2020, but may end after that date.

(e) Leave taken under clause X.2.1(a) does not affect any other paid or unpaid leave entitlement of the employee and counts as service for the purposes of entitlements under this Award and the National Employment Standards.

NOTE: The employer and employee may agree that the employee may take more than 2 weeks’ unpaid pandemic leave.

X.2.2 Annual leave at half pay

(a) Instead of an employee taking paid annual leave on full pay, the employee and their employer may agree to the employee taking twice as much leave on half pay.

(b) Any agreement to take twice as much annual leave at half pay must be recorded in writing and retained as an employee record.

(c) A period of leave under clause X.2.2(a) must start before 30 June 2020, but may end after that date.

EXAMPLE: Instead of an employee taking one week's annual leave on full pay, the employee and their employer may agree to the employee taking 2 weeks' annual leave on half pay. In this example:

- the employee's pay for the 2 weeks' leave is the same as the pay the employee would have been entitled to for one weeks' leave on full pay (where one week's full pay includes leave loading under the Annual Leave clause of this award); and
- one week of leave is deducted from the employee's annual leave accrual.

NOTE 1: A employee covered by this Award who is entitled to the benefit of clause X.2.1 or X.2.2 has a workplace right under section 341(1)(a) of the Act.

NOTE 2: Under section 340(1) of the Act, an employer must not take adverse action against an employee because the employee has a workplace right, has or has not exercised a workplace right, or proposes or does not propose to exercise a workplace right, or to prevent the employee exercising a workplace right. Under section 342(1) of the Act, an employer takes adverse action against an employee if the employer dismisses the employee, injures the employee in his or her employment, alters the position of the employee to the employee's prejudice, or discriminates between the employee and other employees of the employer.

NOTE 3: Under section 343(1) of the Act, a person must not organise or take, or threaten to organise or take, action against another person with intent to coerce the person to exercise or not exercise, or propose to exercise or not exercise, a workplace right, or to exercise or propose to exercise a workplace right in a particular way.

Annual leave at half pay was included in the previous variations to the *Clerks – Private Sector Award 2010* but the award will be updated to include the unpaid pandemic leave.

CONTACT EMPLOYER ASSIST

If you require further advice, please contact Employer Assist on **1300 735 306** or email aaaa@employerassist.com.au

This document is intended for general information purposes only and should not be regarded as legal advice. Please contact Employer Assist by Industry Legal Group if you require legal advice. 3469-6275-3039, v. 4