

Coronavirus and Members' Employment

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COVID-19 (coronavirus) is everywhere in the news and it's difficult to get proper, factual, information about what it is and how it is transmitted. As public and private transport workers, we will be among the first impacted by the effects of the virus.

The reality at this stage is that it looks as though containment of coronavirus is highly unlikely, and probably always was. It must be remembered that this is effectively a new strain of flu, and as transport workers we all know how impossible it is to stop that from spreading. We do however, know what we can personally do to minimise catching the flu and the same measures apply:

- Wash your hands regularly. Wash your hands properly. Hand washing instructions are in all workplaces and are contained in the graphic below.
- If you are unable to wash your hands then use hand sanitiser. All workplaces are providing extra sanitiser to employees.
- Do not touch your face when you have dirty hands. This is crucial.
- Cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow to stop the spread of droplets. This is the main way in which the virus spreads.
- If you wish to wear a mask you are entitled to do so.

In relation to masks, it is current NSW government policy that only medical professionals are able to access surgical masks. Given the health system is going to come under serious strain over the next month or so, it is crucial that those people who may be caring for us or our loved ones can do so safely. Nevertheless, as previously stated, any member who wants to wear a mask that they purchase for work is entitled to do so.

There have been reports that the Epping High student who tested positive to coronavirus was a regular passenger on trains between Epping and Beecroft. Today, station staff have reported a special clean of Beecroft station to ensure that it is free from the virus. It is incumbent on employers

to ensure that extraordinary measures are put in place to ensure that public surfaces in their control are kept clean and virus free.

The RTBU has sought confirmation from Sydney Trains about the surrounding circumstances of the Beecroft Station clean.

It is inevitable given our industry that these types of situations will continue to arise. The RTBU is calling on all employers in our industries to put into place special measures to keep all staff safe at work. We will let members know if their employer responds to this call unsatisfactorily. Every worker has the right to go to work and come home safely. Coronavirus puts this right at risk and it's important that we are provided with regular updates and information from our employer to allow us to make the right decisions for ourselves and our co-workers.

In the meantime, remember that if you feel unsafe at work, it is important to talk to your HSR on what action needs to be taken. This includes potential infection by the coronavirus.

If you are infected by coronavirus and are forced into isolation or are otherwise unable to work, there may be special leave entitlements that you are entitled too (rather than just personal/sick leave). If you are unsure, please contact your delegate or organiser. We do not believe that members should be forced to use their leave entitlements unduly.

For more information on the virus and the precautions that you can take, please visit the following link: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus-faqs.aspx>

Remember that the RTBU is here to help if the Coronavirus affects you at work. Please give us a call on (02) 9264 2511 or email us on nswwho@rtbu-nsw.asn.au.

