

IR POLICY AND GOVERNANCE UPDATE



INTRODUCTION

I hope this first IR update for 2022 finds everyone well as we all start to fire up the boosters for the year. There is lots to look forward to in 2022 on the workplace relations front and we are here to support you with any related issues. COVID-19 and the current Omicron strain of the virus particularly will remain an issue of concern for businesses, employees and society. This week we look at various issues including compliance, the extension of Schedule X in the industry Award, and various COVID-19 related issues that may affect your business.

SCHEDULE X PARTLY REINSTATED UNTIL JUNE 2022

Although originally meant to expire on 31 December 2021, the Fair Work Commission has determined to extend the operational period of the unpaid pandemic leave component of Schedule X in the Graphic Arts Printing and Publishing Award until 30 June 2022. Essentially the Schedule continues to provide for unpaid pandemic leave of up to 2 weeks for an employee required by government or a medical authority to self-isolate for COVID related reasons. The Schedule X component that permitted an employer and employee to agree to an employee taking double the period of annual leave at the half-pay has expired effective from 31 December 2021 and did not form part of the Commission's decision to extend the life of the Schedule X.

NSW – REGISTRATION OF POSITIVE RAPID ANTIGEN TEST

From yesterday, 12 January 2022, anyone in NSW who tests positive to COVID-19 using a Rapid Antigen Test ("RAT") is now required to register that result with Services NSW via its website, via the mobile phone app or by contacting Services NSW by phone on 13 77 88. The registration is stored according to government privacy requirements and only accessible to authorised NSW Health personnel. If a test is positive those individuals must follow any self-isolation protocols and seek medical advice. From 19 January 2022, failure to register a positive RAT can result in fines of up to \$1000.

THE OMICRON VARIANT

The Omicron COVID-19 variant has become the new and rather more virulent strain of the virus. It appears to be less severe than the Delta variant, however it is far more contagious and infectious. Based on current research, using simple cloth facemasks may not be the most effective method for filtering out the fine particles of the Omicron variant. This is particularly the case when spending longer periods of time in populated surroundings.

As a result, wearing appropriately fitting high quality facemasks is now more important than ever. Using genuine P2/N95 rated facemasks is the top option, otherwise surgical masks are the next best option. In non-surgical settings, P2/N95 masks can be worn for several days if they remain dry. Wearing a mask that only across your mouth won't do the job and wearing a mask under your chin requires no comment. For those of us who sport beards, a P2/N95 mask will not obtain the best seal so it may be that the rest of the summer period is free of facial follicles.

COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER SHOTS

Members should consider the issue and an approach to COVID-19 booster shots for workers this year. Booster shots are available to everyone over 18 years of age and who are fully vaccinated.

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Ordinarily a booster dose can be undertaken if it has been five months or longer since the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

VICTORIAN COMMERCIAL TENANCY RELIEF SCHEME TO END

A reminder for any effected members, the Victorian government scheme will end from 15 January 2022. The scheme has been available for small to medium sized enterprises who are commercial tenants with a turnover of less than \$50m and a 30% turnover decline due to COVID-19. There is no suggestion from the Victorian government that this scheme will be extended.

DIRECTOR IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

As detailed in previous updates, the framework for the Director Identification Number (“DIN”) is now up and running. A DIN is a unique identification number for each eligible individual, which once issued, will remain with that individual for all directorships and for life.

Who will need a DIN?

You will need a director ID if you are an eligible officer of a company or other body corporate registered under the *Corporations Act 2001*. Essentially, an eligible officer is a person who is appointed as:

- > a director.
- > an alternate director who is acting in that capacity.

Application process

Applications for a DIN are made via the [Australian Business Registry Services](#) website.

Application timeframes

When a person must apply for your director ID depends on the date they became a director:

- > on or before 31 October 2021, they have until 30 November 2022 to apply;
- > **between 1 November 2021 and 4 April 2022**, they have 28 days from their date of appointment to apply; and
- > **from 5 April 2022**, they apply before their appointment.

CONTACT

Any Industrial Relations Member who has a related query should contact Charles Watson, GM – IR, Policy and Governance at The Real Media Collective via email charles@thermc.com.au or mobile:+61 428 568 032.

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