

## Leave management guidance

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XX November 2020

### Supporting a consistent approach to leave management

#### Introduction

The purpose of this leave management guidance is to provide a set of principles to guide consistent decision making in relation to employee annual leave and/or long service leave management. The guidance document should be applied over the Christmas and New Year period and other key leave periods throughout the year, particularly as we continue to manage impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made 2020 an unusual year and the impacts will continue for an extended period. The introduction of travel restrictions has resulted in a reduction in leave being taken by employees, some pre-booked leave has been cancelled and this trend is also evident in future leave planning.

Ahpra aims to continue supporting the health and wellbeing of employees whilst maintaining operational requirements and appropriately managing employee leave balances. Leave is important to support employee's wellbeing and provides opportunity for rest and relaxation. Working extended periods without a meaningful break can present a risk to employees and leads to a growing employee leave liability for Ahpra.

There are clear benefits in having time away from work even when employees are unable to travel. This year has seen us all have to make some adjustments and manage various priorities as a result of the pandemic.

Ahpra is encouraging all managers and employees to continue having conversations around health and wellbeing and discuss plans to take a break from work.

#### Guiding principles

- Priorities for consideration of annual or long service leave are:
  - Employee wellbeing and welfare
  - Operational requirements
  - Employee leave liability
- Availability of leave during key periods such as Christmas/New Year and school holidays should be maximised wherever possible however operational considerations due to peak registration periods needs to be taken into account when approving or not approving leave requests.
- Employees should be encouraged to take leave prior to, or immediately after peak activity periods to help maintain wellbeing.
- Where possible, leave should be encouraged for employees who have not had a substantial break (at least 5 working days) in the previous six months.
- Operational requirements are an important consideration in leave planning as Ahpra needs to continue supporting the safe and professional practice of registered health practitioners and appropriately prioritise the safety of the public. This means, not everyone who applies for leave can have leave approved during peak periods.
- Managers should aim to reduce discretionary work demands, such as project work, during peak leave periods.

- Functional areas with high operational demand during key leave periods may require longer notice or incorporate an expression of interest process to appropriately balance the wellbeing of employees and operational requirements.
- Relevant considerations in prioritising leave requests include:
  - Personal circumstances requiring special consideration (e.g. weddings, milestone birthdays, long term travel plans, religious or cultural reasons)
  - Amount of notice provided regarding personal circumstances
  - Leave taken in equivalent leave periods, in previous years
  - Availability of employees to cover position/work in critical functions
  - Amount of leave taken in previous 12 months
  - Leave balances in excess of 8 weeks (12 weeks for Northern Territory employees)
- Standard working arrangements continue during peak leave periods. For December 2020 and January 2021 this includes attending the office in line with the Ahpra office days protocols.  
Where exceptional circumstances exist, changes to standard working arrangements need to be discussed and endorsed by the relevant National Director and State/Territory Manager consulted.
- Employees who have insufficient leave available, may apply for purchased leave, Leave Without Pay (LWOP) or request some of their annual leave accrual to be advanced in accordance with the Ahpra Enterprise Agreement.
- Appointments to act in a higher position during key leave periods will be considered where there is a critical operational requirement for the position. Business areas with reduced operational requirements will not require acting arrangements for all positions.
- Where leave is unable to be approved due to operational requirements, employees should discuss with their manager an alternative period of leave that is mutually convenient.

### Business requirements over Christmas / New Year period

The following table identifies relative business demand over the Christmas / New Year period.

Low Demand	Moderate Demand	High Demand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ National Legal Practice</li> <li>○ Strategy and Policy (General)</li> <li>○ People and Culture</li> <li>○ Finance and Risk</li> <li>○ Information and Technology (General)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Notifications</li> <li>○ Compliance</li> <li>○ Strategy and Policy (Board Services and Communications)</li> <li>○ Information and Technology (Service Desk and Project deliverables)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registration</li> </ul>

### Related documents

- [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency Enterprise Agreement 2019 – 2022](#)
- [HR Delegations Policy HR033](#)
- [Office days protocol](#)

## Document history

<b>Approval Authority</b>	National Executive
<b>Document Owner</b>	Executive Director, People and Culture
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	
<b>Date Approved</b>	
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