



A•S•U

File/Our Ref: 28.411 RP:db
Your Ref:
Please quote in reply

Friday 13 March 2020

Hon Christian Porter MP
Attorney General
Minister for Industry Relations
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: Christian.Porter.MP@aph.gov.au

**Australian
Services
Union**

**National Office
Melbourne & Sydney**

All correspondence to:

Ground Floor
116 Queensberry St
Carlton South VIC 3053

T: (03) 9342 1400
F: (03) 9342 1499

E: info@asu.asn.au
W: www.asu.asn.au

FB: [www.facebook.com/
australianservicesunion](https://www.facebook.com/australianservicesunion)
TW: @ASUnion

Dear Minister

Re: Australian Government Response to Coronavirus

I refer to the Coronavirus Briefing that was held in Sydney on Tuesday 10 March 2020.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) was represented at the Briefing by Judith Wright, Deputy Secretary of the NSW and ACT Services Branch.

The ASU has members in the local government, energy, water, public transport, airlines, shipping, travel, ports, social and community and disability services, information technology and the private sector clerical and administrative industries.

Coronavirus poses a real and immediate threat to the livelihoods of ASU members working in many of these areas and in particular in the airlines and disability industries.

During the Briefing, Ms Wright advised you of the situation faced by NDIS participants and Disability Workers arising from Coronavirus. Over 250,000 Australians are NDIS Participants and they are supported by 100,000 Full Time Equivalent Workers. The NDIS workforce is expected to double over the next five years, creating an estimated 1 in 5 new jobs in Australia during this period. According to the 2019 National Disability Services *State of the Disability Sector Report*, around 40% of Disability Workers are employed on a casual basis.

The Australian Government is the purchaser of supports provided to NDIS Participants and as such is in a position to ensure that Disability Workers are not subjected to any financial detriment as a result of Coronavirus. We note your advice at the briefing that permanent workers who have been diagnosed with Coronavirus are entitled to personal leave and that a worker who ready, willing and able to attend work but who is either directed not to attend work by their employer or who chooses not to attend work because it is not safe to do so should be paid as usual by their employer.

Given the prevalence of casual workers supporting NDIS participants, it is vital that the Australian Government ensures that adequate funding is made available so that casual workers receive the same entitlements as permanent workers in the circumstances outlined above.

In this regard the ASU supports the position expressed by the ACTU on behalf of all unions that the Australian Government legislate for two weeks "special leave" for all workers affected by the pandemic, noting that paid leave in excess of two weeks may be required in specific circumstances including where work involves supporting vulnerable service users, clients or patients.

Without funding for these leave entitlements, many casual workers will be unable to meet their day to day living costs and will therefore be compelled to attend work through financial necessity. Without urgent intervention by the Australian Government to ensure against financial hardship of the NDIS workforce in these circumstances, the health and safety of NDIS Participants will inevitably be put at risk.

Given the grave risks to public health outlined in this letter, we request your urgent confirmation that the Australian Government will take immediate steps to make additional funding available to ensure that casual workers are not subject to any financial detriment under the NDIS.

Yours faithfully



Tel: +61 2 9283 9280
Mobile: 0448 203 392
E-mail: rpotter@asu.asn.au

Robert Potter
NATIONAL SECRETARY