

COVID-19 – Essential Apprentice and Trainee Information

Ai Group Apprentice and Trainee Centre (Ai Group ATC) offices have remained open. All our staff are continuing to assist our apprentices, trainees and host organisations, and our recruitment team is still in operation. We are actively working with the range of measures provided by government agencies to ensure continued assistance throughout these challenging times. We remain in continual contact with our host organisations on ways to best manage the placements of our apprentices and trainees.

Potential workplace changes:

If your host is requiring changes to your work hours or schedules, contact your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC). We will work this through with you and your host organisation.

Reduced hours:

Where agreed and arranged, you may work reduced hours. This may be a beneficial opportunity in the current environment and will allow you to maintain an income while supporting your host as they continue their operations. We would see any arrangements being a short-term plan, and specifically due to the current climate. Any extension of these changes beyond the current restrictions, may require a variation to your Contract of Training. To this end, please ensure you communicate with your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) about any changes and time frames of any reduced working hours. We need to ensure we keep records of these, the length and discuss with your host, prior to you starting any reductions. Other options include utilising annual leave for days not working, leave without pay or even working at two different host organisations. Please contact your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) to discuss any of these options.

Taking of leave:

Based on what leave you have accrued, the taking of annual leave or RDOs may be an option to help you maintain your position and assist the host to remain operational. Consult with your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) regarding your leave entitlements.

Trade Support Loan:

If you have signed up for the Trade Support Loan payments, you can opt out of receiving these payments at any stage. You will need to contact us, or your ASSN provider. The details of your provider are on your contract of Training, or on your loan paperwork. Alternatively call your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) for assistance.

Suspension of Contract of Training:

This is not a preferred option; however, a host organisation may elect to “handback” an apprentice or trainee if they have suffered a downturn in work due to the pandemic and economy. We will endeavour to rotate all suspended apprentices and trainees to another host organisation. Please be aware that this may be challenging in the current environment and will require you to work closely with your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC).

Other options:

Where possible we will work with you on continuing your training and keep you engaged with your TAFE, or training provider. However, attendance at most (if not all) training providers is currently prohibited. If you are continuing with any studies whilst RTO's are in stand-down, the time is not paid. We will monitor the amount of progress you make to ensure you are not creating any issues with true competence progression as part of your 'on the job' training.

Will I get paid, what if I'm suspended?

We will continue to work with you and if possible, rotate you to another host organisation. In the meantime, the good news is as a result of recent stimulus measures you are eligible to apply for government assistance through the JobSeeker criteria, even though your apprenticeship is suspended.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/jobseeker-payment>

What if I find another employer?

As you have signed a Contract or Training with Ai Group ATC you will be required to work with your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) in regard to employment. You will be required to communicate with your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) so they can contact the employer.

The Fair Work Commission (FWC):

The Fair Work Commission has varied most modern awards to:

- Give an employee an entitlement to take up to fourteen (14) days of unpaid pandemic leave if the employee is required to self-isolate or is otherwise prevented from working by measures taken by government or medical authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Enable an employee to reach agreement with their employer to take twice as much annual leave for half the pay.

As a result of this Pandemic a range of Government support is available. Please speak to your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC) for more information.

Ai Group Apprentice and Trainee Centre Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

Our Employee Assistance Program via Lifeworks seeks to provide you with support on a range of personal and work-related issues that may be impacting on your wellbeing.

Our extended program now includes benefits such as:

- Access to Lifeworks services for you and your immediate family members;
- EAP Counselling delivered either face-to-face, over the telephone or via video link (sessions may need to be remote under current isolation regulations).
- Lifeworks Mortgage@ssist, Legal@ssist and Finance@ssist services,

These services are readily available by calling 1300 361 008 or visit

<https://www.livewell.lifeworks.com/public/welcome.asp>, Password is: AustIndGroup

Other Useful Links:

JobSeeker and JobKeeper

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19/if-you-need-payment-coronavirus-covid-19>

Australian Gov Treasury

<https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus>

Fair Work Commission

<https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/>

PLEASE NOTE: It Is Essential That You Remain in Contact with Your Employment and Training Consultant (ETC).

Please Note: The information provided regarding incentive and stimulus payments is 'general advice' as at April 15, 2020 and does not constitute legal advice. The federal, state and territory government directives are changing regularly. It is your responsibility to inform yourselves of these updated arrangements where they impact on employment.



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