

13 March 2020

## DON'T LET COVID-19 TAKE OVER YOUR BUSINESS

Being the recipient of a number of subscriptions to various media outlets, industry bodies and government departments, the coronavirus is causing wide-spread concern and in some cases, panic. The world is under attack by another coronavirus - today it is COVID-19, MERS in 2012 and SARS in 2002 and in my past observations, as with coronavirus-COVID-19 and other world-wide infections the task of living, running a business and the *moving people* task continues on, as it must.

I believe a critical component of getting yourself, your business, your staff through this pandemic is to remember the 'human factor' of people – they may be fearful (of the unknown), they may be panicked (by what they are reading, seeing and witnessing). It is important that as *the moving people* industry we call for calm and a common-sense approach to dealing with the virus fall-out by incorporating some good health and well-being practices in our day to day operations.

It is important not to over-look the responsibility that all organisations have to their employees to ensure they feel safe in the work place and are able to voice their concerns without criticism and without fear of losing their pay or worse-still, their job. It is important to ensure that we create an environment that listens, that understands and is willing to create flexible solutions that best meets everyone's needs. Job security and where an employee's next pay will come from are massive personal, human, financial and management issues when it comes to this virus situation RIGHT NOW. That is not to mention managing the impacts of possible reductions in services (as Qantas has just announced) and therefore a possible downturn on the supply side of the industry as well.

Here are some steps that you can implement TODAY, and may be already, to keep a functioning workforce now and in the long term that looks beyond your legal, contractual, EA and Award obligations and provide some thought on managing the human factors largely created by fear and unknown.

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## 8 Steps to not allow COVID-19 overcome your business as an Operator or Supplier

These simple steps will empower you to manage the COVID-19 situation and create certainty to your most valuable asset - your staff. Communicating with your people on a daily basis about what you are doing through whatever communication platforms you use is a good place to start. Your No1 priority is their health and ongoing employment in the future.

- 1. Be honest** about the difficulties in relation to the challenges you are facing in relation to the employment issues and the reality that there may be difficult times in the short to medium term but you aim to keep all staff healthy and employed.
- 2. Meet all of your employment requirements** with the law and enterprise agreements or Awards.
- 3. Work closely with the BIC and your State Associations** to keep up to date with important health information.
- 4. Do a workplace audit** and put in place all possible workplace risk reduction policies and procedures as per the information you will have already received.
- 5. Offer staff one on one consultation with you to express their concerns** – you may not have the answers and should mainly listen, but you will learn and understand personal circumstances.
- 6. Ensure a no blame – no consequence culture is conveyed** if people want to take time off, even in low risk jobs. The psychological fear is real for individuals and their families. By this I mean, a long-term job will be open, you will ensure all entitlements are met. Consider adopting a position that treat people ‘as sick’ even if they are not sick with the virus due to the psychological issues regardless if they are expressed by the employee or not. Whilst this is more difficult for casuals, a similar negotiated arrangement between drivers in relation to time off with pay, time off without pay and initiate a cooperative and team based culture/approach to fill shifts as required for those directly impacted by the virus to ensure longer term job security for everyone.
- 7. Consider looking at a seniority based /employment tenure approach in the event of reductions in service.** As another option, drivers could share the shifts and “the love” and come up with their own solution.
- 8. The key message** at a time of high psychological concern and fear is to ensure we make our managers accessible to our staff. To listen, to understand and to create flexible solutions that best meet everyone’s needs.

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# View from Canberra – SPECIAL EDITION



## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

[Industry Media Release](#) which includes some simple things you can implement in your day to day business to help mitigate the spread of this virus and economic announcements from the Morrison Government yesterday to support business and keep people employed that the BIC has been advocating for.

[BIC Health and Wellbeing Guide](#) published in 2015 which may provide some useful tools to assist you in formulating your risk management plan.

[Fact Sheet from the Australian Government](#) on how you can check your eligibility for government assistance and how you might access immediate cashflow assistance.

[UITP Guidelines for Public Transport Operators](#) tailoring continuity plans responding to specific challenges of communicable diseases.

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