

ASU statement on Coronavirus

ASU officials are urgently seeking information from Australian airlines regarding their response to the Coronavirus outbreak and the precautions being put in place for ground operations staff with direct passenger contact.

Your safety and wellbeing is our highest priority

ASU officials met with Virgin Australia Group (VAG) on the evening of Thursday 30 January. VAG have confirmed that hand-sanitising packs, masks and gloves are quickly being rolled out to cabin crew, as well as ground crew at major and regional airports.

Safety procedures that should have already been triggered

Due to the nature of global travel, airlines workers can be at a higher risk from exposure to overseas outbreaks of communicable diseases. ASU members working for most major Australian airlines should have procedures in place to contain outbreaks such as Coronavirus.

VAG has confirmed hand-sanitising packs, masks and gloves are being made available to ground crew as supplies are distributed. Local supervisors should also be allowing staff to wear gloves and masks, as well as expressly support team members' right to choose what is best in relation to using personal protective equipment.

The ASU is heeding the medical advice outlined by Dr. Sara Souter, VAG's chief medical officer. We were briefed that masks are most effective for a symptomatic person to prevent further contagion and may protect you when you are working in direct contact with a symptomatic person. Gloves are also effective but only if they are used properly. Good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough hygiene is your best protection – if you need to use gloves they must be changed regularly and are not a substitute for hand and sneeze/cough hygiene.

Remember: if you are in close contact with a person displaying symptoms, the same procedures for the containment of all communicable diseases applies to Coronavirus.

Other workplace impacts

The ASU is in constant contact with the International Transport Federation (ITF) which is the global trade union group for airline workers – they are keeping us up to date with developments in other countries and on best practice and we will also keep you updated. The ASU is contacting airlines about their contingency plans for flight cancellations, as well as fair and equitable rostering standards when addressing any temporary changes to workloads and as always we will consult with members on the best way to handle these issues.

If you or someone you know becomes unwell or concerned that they may have symptoms of Coronavirus, immediately seek medical care. Symptoms of Coronavirus can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Affected people may experience fever, flu like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and headaches, and difficulty breathing.

How to protect yourself and help prevent the spread of the virus

Most generally, it is considered prudent for people who are ill to delay international travel and for people developing symptoms following international travel to seek medical care.

Unless you are in direct contact with a person displaying symptoms, good hygiene practice is your best protection from the virus.

The ASU provides the following advice based on Australian Government Department of Health information, as follows:

- Practice good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough hygiene.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet.
- Use hand-sanitiser.
- Avoid contact with others (including touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact).

More information is available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet>

Details about Coronavirus are changing every day. The safety and well-being of our members is our highest priority. We are continuing to monitor the latest updates and will come back to you when we have more information.

If you have any other concerns about your welfare at work you can always talk more with your Union delegate, your Union organiser or contact your branch.

Your ASU workplace representatives:

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QLD	Billy Colless	0419 736 886
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Your ASU delegates:

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NSW	Karen Oviedo
VIC	Sarah Hogan
VIC	Shannon Chirgwin
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