

30 March 2020

MA000002-02/2020

## Clerks – Private Sector Award 2010

### New schedule to assist businesses and employees deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

Following negotiations and agreement between the Australian Industry Group (**Ai Group**), the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Australian Services Union (**ASU**), the Fair Work Commission (**Commission**) has added a new schedule to the *Clerks – Private Sector Award 2010 (Award)* to assist employers and employees deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon Christian Porter MP, intervened in the proceedings in support of the agreed award variations.

Following a hearing on Saturday 28 March, a Full Bench of the Commission decided to include the schedule in the Award.

The award variations were only able to be implemented so promptly because agreement was reached with the ACTU and the ASU (the union that represents clerical employees) on the terms of the award variations.

Key features of the new schedule include:

- The schedule is entitled: **Schedule I – Award flexibility during the COVID-19 Pandemic.**
- The provisions of the schedule are aimed at preserving the ongoing viability of businesses and preserving jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The schedule operates up to 30 June 2020. This date can be extended by the Fair Work Commission.
- The schedule varies a number of clauses in the Award to implement a relatively high degree of flexibility and to give employers more discretion in certain areas.
- As directed by the employer, employees are required to perform all duties that are within their skill and competency regardless of their classification.
- A shorter minimum engagement period of two hours applies to part-time and casual employees working from home.
- Where an employee requests and the employer agrees, the spread of ordinary hours of work for day workers on Mondays to Fridays has been extended to between 6.00am and 11.00pm for employees working from home. Day workers are not shift workers for the purposes of any penalties, loadings or allowances under the Award.
- An employer and the full-time and part-time employees in a workplace (or section of a workplace) who are covered by the Award, may agree to temporarily reduce ordinary hours of work for the employees. A number of conditions apply including:
  - The approval of at least 75% of the employees covered by the Award in the workplace or section is required in order to implement the arrangement for all employees covered by the Award in the workplace or section.
  - The hours cannot be reduced to less than 75 per cent of the previous hours.

- Where a reduction in hours takes effect, the employee's weekly wage is reduced by the same proportion.
  - All relevant leave accruals and all entitlements on termination of employment must be based on each employee's previous weekly ordinary hours of work (e.g. full-time hours for an employee who previously worked full-time).
  - The schedule includes detailed requirements about the voting process to determine whether the employees support the shorter working hours arrangement. If these requirements are not followed, the shorter working hours arrangement is not valid.
- The provisions in the schedule do not prevent an employer and an individual employee agreeing in writing (including by electronic means) to reduce the employee's ordinary working hours.
  - An employer may direct an employee to take any annual leave that has accrued, subject to considering the employee's personal circumstances, by giving at least one week's notice, or any shorter period of notice that may be agreed. A direction to take annual leave must not result in an employee having less than two weeks of accrued annual leave remaining.
  - An employer and an employee may agree to the employee taking up to twice as much annual leave at a proportionately reduced pay rate.
  - An employer may close down its operations (or part of its operations) for a period up to the date of expiry of the schedule (currently 30 June 2020). In such circumstances, the employer may require an employee covered by the Award to take annual leave by giving at least one week's notice or any shorter period of notice that may be agreed. Where an employee has not accrued sufficient annual leave to cover the close-down period, the employee must be allowed to take any accrued annual leave and be granted unpaid leave for the remainder of the close-down. Where an employee is placed on unpaid leave during the close-down, the period of unpaid leave will count as service for the purposes of relevant entitlements under the Award and the National Employment Standards in the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

### **What are the specific terms of the variations to the Award?**

The specific terms of the Award variations are separately set out in the **attachment**.

### **What is the operative date?**

The variations come into effect from the first full pay period that starts on or after **28 March 2020**.

### **Do you require further advice?**

For information or assistance relating to the application of the Commission's decision, please contact Ai Group's Workplace Advice Line on 1300 55 66 77.



**Stephen Smith**  
**HEAD OF NATIONAL WORKPLACE RELATIONS POLICY**



# DETERMINATION

*Fair Work Act 2009*

s.157—FWC may vary etc. modern awards if necessary to achieve modern awards objective

**Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;  
The Australian Industry Group**

(AM2020/10)

## **CLERKS—PRIVATE SECTOR AWARD 2010**

[MA000002]

Clerical industry

JUSTICE ROSS, PRESIDENT  
DEPUTY PRESIDENT CLANCY  
COMMISSIONER BISSETT

MELBOURNE, 28 MARCH 2020

*Application to vary the Clerks—Private Sector Award 2010.*

A. Further to decision [[\[2020\] FWC FB 1690](#)] issued by the Full Bench on 28 March 2020, the above award is varied as follows:

1. By inserting Schedule I as follows:

### **Schedule I—Award Flexibility During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**I.1** The provisions of Schedule I are aimed at preserving the ongoing viability of businesses and preserving jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic and not to set any precedent in relation to award entitlements after its expiry date.

**I.2** Schedule I operates from 28 March 2020 until 30 June 2020. The period of operation can be extended on application to the Fair Work Commission.

**I.2** During the operation of Schedule I, the following provisions apply:

#### **I.2.1 Operational flexibility**

(a) As directed by their employer, where necessary an employee will perform any duties that are within their skill and competency regardless of their classification under clause 15—Classifications and Schedule B—Classifications, provided that the duties are safe, and that the employee is licensed and qualified to perform them.

- (b) An employer must not reduce an employee's pay if the employee is directed to perform duties in accordance with clause I.2.1.

### **I.2.2 Part-time employees working from home**

Instead of clause 11.5 (Part-time employment), an employer is required to roster a part-time employee who is working from home by agreement with the employer, for a minimum of 2 consecutive hours on any shift.

### **I.2.3 Casual employees working from home**

Instead of clause 12.4 (Casual employment), an employer must pay a casual employee who is working from home by agreement with the employer, a minimum payment of 2 hours' work at the appropriate rate.

### **I.2.4 Ordinary hours of work for employees working from home**

- (a) Instead of clause 25.1(b) (Ordinary hours of work (other than shiftworkers), for employees working from home by agreement with the employer where an employee requests and the employer agrees, the spread of ordinary hours of work for day workers is between 6.00 am and 11.00 pm, Monday to Friday, and between 7.00 am and 12.30 pm on Saturday.
- (b) Day workers are not shiftworkers for the purposes of any penalties, loadings or allowances under the award, including for the purposes of clause 28.
- (c) The facilitative provision in clause 25.2 (Ordinary hours of work (other than shiftworkers)), which allows the spread of hours to be altered, will not operate for the employees referred to in clause I.2.4(a).

### **I.2.5 Agreed temporary reduction in ordinary hours**

- (a) An employer and the full-time and part-time employees in a workplace or section of a workplace, may agree to temporarily reduce ordinary hours of work for the employees in the workplace or section for a specified period while Schedule I is in operation.
- (b) At least 75% of the full-time and part-time employees in the relevant workplace or section must approve any agreement to temporarily reduce ordinary hours.
- (c) For the purposes of clause I.2.5(a), ordinary hours of work may be temporarily reduced:
  - (i) For full time employees, to not fewer than 75% of the full-time ordinary hours applicable to an employee immediately prior to the implementation of the temporary reduction in ordinary hours.

- (ii) For part-time employees, to not fewer than 75% of the part-time employee's agreed hours immediately prior to the implementation of the temporary reduction in ordinary hours.
- (d) Where a reduction in hours takes effect under clause I.2.5(a), the employee's ordinary hourly rate will be maintained but the weekly wage will be reduced by the same proportion.
- (e) Nothing in Schedule I prevents an employer and an individual employee agreeing in writing (including by electronic means) to reduce the employee's hours or to move the employee temporarily from full-time to part-time hours of work, with a commensurate reduction in the minimum weekly wage.
- (f) If an employee's hours have been reduced in accordance with clause I.2.5(a):
  - (i) the employer must not unreasonably refuse an employee request to engage in reasonable secondary employment; and
  - (ii) the employer must consider all reasonable employee requests for training, professional development and/or study leave.
- (g) For the purposes of clause I.2.5(a), where there is any reduction in the ordinary hours of work for full-time or part-time employees in a workplace or section during the period Schedule I is in operation, all relevant accruals and all entitlements on termination of employment will continue to be based on each employee's weekly ordinary hours of work prior to the commencement of Schedule I.
- (h) For the purposes of clause I.2.5(a), the approval of employees shall be determined by a vote of employees. In order for the vote to be valid, the employer must comply with the following requirements:
  - (i) Where any of the employees are known to be members of the Australian Services Union or another organisation, the ASU or other organisation shall be informed before the vote takes place.
  - (ii) Prior to the vote of employees, the employer shall provide the employees with the contact details of the ASU, should they wish to contact the ASU for advice; and
  - (iii) The employer must notify the Fair Work Commission by emailing [clerksaward@fwc.gov.au](mailto:clerksaward@fwc.gov.au) that the employer proposes to conduct a vote under Schedule I. The employer shall provide the work email addresses of the employees who will be participating in the vote, to the Commission. The Commission will then distribute the ASU COVID-19 Information Sheet to the employees prior to the vote. The Commission shall list the name of the business on a register which will be accessible to the ASU, upon request, for the period when Schedule I is in operation.

- (iv) The vote shall not take place until at least 24 hours after the requirements of clause I.2.5(h)(i), (ii) and (iii) have been met.

#### **I.2.6 Annual leave**

- (a) Employers and individual employees may agree to take up to twice as much annual leave at a proportionately reduced rate for all or part of any agreed or directed period away from work, including any close-down.
- (b) Instead of clauses 29.6, 29.7 and 29.8 (Annual leave), an employer may direct an employee to take any annual leave that has accrued, subject to considering the employee's personal circumstances, by giving at least one week's notice, or any shorter period of notice that may be agreed. A direction to take annual leave shall not result in an employee having less than 2 weeks of accrued annual leave remaining.

#### **I.2.7 Close down**

- (a) Instead of clause 29.5 (Annual leave), and subject to clause I.2.7(b), an employer may:
  - (i) require an employee to take annual leave as part of a close-down of its operations by giving at least one week's notice, or part of its operations, or any shorter period of notice that may be agreed; and
  - (ii) where an employee who has not accrued sufficient leave to cover part or all of the close-down, the employee is to be allowed paid annual leave for the period for which they have accrued sufficient leave and given unpaid leave for the remainder of the closedown.
- (b) Clause I.2.7(a) does not permit an employer to require an employee to take leave for a period beyond the period of operation of Schedule I.
- (c) Where an employee is placed on unpaid leave pursuant to clause I.2.7(a), the period of unpaid leave will count as service for the purposes of relevant award and NES entitlements.

2. By updating the table of contents and cross-references accordingly.

B. This determination comes into effect on 28 March 2020. In accordance with s.165(3) of the Fair Work Act 2009 this determination does not take effect until the start of the first full pay period that starts on or after 28 March 2020.

PRESIDENT

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