



ETU APPRENTICE BRIEFING

Dear Apprentice Member,

The Electrical Trades Union is here to support our apprentice members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Please read on for essential information on apprentice rights, training contracts and the range of government and social security support that may be available.

Please help the ETU NSW & ACT Branch stay in touch by monitoring your email, including your junk folder, following our Facebook and Instagram, and visiting etunsw.com.au. A full list of ETU organiser contacts is below for your convenience.

In unity

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Know Your Rights

Training Contract

Apprentices are employed under a training contract which is a legally binding agreement between an employer and an apprentice. The contract remains valid until an apprentice has completed their training and they are competent in the skills required for the trade or vocation and qualification specified within the training contract, unless it is terminated.

What to do if your employer attempts to cancel the training contract

1. Do not sign any forms relating to the suspension or termination of a training contract until you have spoken to an ETU Organiser. Call the ETU (02) 92674844
2. If your employer or Training Services NSW notifies you of a suspension or cancellation of your training contract notify an ETU Organiser ASAP. Call the ETU (02) 92674844
3. If you have signed a training contract suspension or cancellation form, you have seven days to contact Training Services NSW to withdraw your consent. Notify an ETU Organiser immediately. Call the ETU (02) 92674844

Can employers direct an apprentice to use their leave accruals if no work is available?

Usually only in limited circumstances, such as excessive leave or shutdown over the Christmas/New Year period.

You will need look at the following documents to verify:

1. A copy of the industrial agreement the apprentice is working under (e.g. Award or EBA).
2. Any letter of offer the apprentice may have signed
3. Company policy that includes provision for direct employees to take annual leave.

Wage subsidy for employers of apprentices

There are wage subsidies available for small business owners.

If you are in discussions with employers about terminating or suspending an apprentice training contract or employment, please make sure they are aware of the subsidy and how to access it. Further information below.

Supporting Apprentices and Trainees provides a wage subsidy to small business (defined in Government media releases as fewer than 20 employees), to support the retention of their existing apprentices and trainees.

The wage subsidy is also available to employers of any size, including a Group Training Organisation, if they re-engage an apprentice that has been displaced from a small business.

The subsidy is supposed to support businesses to manage cash-flow challenges and help small businesses retain their apprentices and trainees.

Eligible employers will receive assistance in the form of a wage subsidy reimbursed in arrears at 50 per cent of the apprentice's or trainee's wage.

The wage subsidy will be available for a maximum of nine months, covering wages paid over the nine-month period from 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020, or paid from the date of re-employment for an apprentice or trainee who has been displaced.

Employers will be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$7,000 per quarter, per eligible apprentice or trainee. Employers can register with an Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) provider for the subsidy from 2 April 2020.

Employers will be able to access the subsidy after an eligibility assessment is undertaken by an AASN provider and following submission of a claim form and other supporting documentation by the employer.

Final claims for payment must be lodged by 31 December 2020.

If an apprentice is terminated, what financial support is available

Centrelink

There is an additional \$550 per fortnight supplement that applies for an initial six-month period. This period can be extended by the Minister.

There will be an exemption for new and existing JobSeeker payment, Youth Allowance (other) and Parenting Payment recipients from the assets test, liquid assets waiting period and ordinary waiting periods.

If you have a partner, their income still affects your eligibility. If they earn more than \$25,831 then your rate is reduced 60c for every \$1 until \$49,664 after which you are no longer eligible.

The total payment will be approximately \$1,100 a fortnight, however the additional Coronavirus supplement component (\$550) doesn't commence until 27 April 2020.

Youth Allowance

The \$550 per fortnight Coronavirus supplement will be applied automatically to existing recipients of Youth Allowance. The wait times and asset limits have been waived for new claims from 25 March 2020 to 24 September 2020. The income limit will still apply.

If you are already receiving Youth Allowance, then you will automatically have the full Coronavirus supplement applied to your payment.

If you aren't receiving Youth Allowance you can apply for it through Centrelink and the asset test and wait times will be waived, however the income tests remain.

If you are independent and single (or have a partner) then your income (or combined incomes) from \$25,831 will reduce your rate by 60c for every \$1 until \$49,664 after which you will no longer be eligible.

If you are dependent, then a parents' income test applies. This has a range of different components to it and you should check the details online with Centrelink—generally the payment reduces by 20 cents for every dollar your parents earn over \$54,677.

Additional \$750 payments

There are two \$750 payments available in certain circumstances.

The first payment is available from the end of April. Eligibility is determined if between 12 March 2020 and 13 April 2020 (inclusive) for a day in that period you received one of the following benefits for that day:

- Age Pension
- Family Tax Benefit
- Disability Support Pension
- Farm Household Allowance
- Wife Pension
- Carer Payment
- Bereavement Allowance
- Widow B Pension
- Widow Allowance
- Parenting Payment
- Youth Allowance
- Austudy Payment
- NewStart Allowance
- JobSeeker Payment
- Sickness Allowance
- Special Benefit
- Partner Allowance
- Carer Allowance; or
- Double Orphan Pension.

The second payment is available from late July. Eligibility is the same as above with two differences: in addition to the above list if you hold a concession card you will receive the second payment, but if by July you are on a Centrelink payment and receiving the additional Coronavirus supplement payment (more on this below) you will not receive the second \$750 payment.

Superannuation

Your fund will already have rules for accessing your money in extreme hardship circumstances plus there is capacity to limited additional access in certain circumstances.

Workers will be able to apply to access \$10,000 before 1 July and \$10,000 after 1 July from their superannuation fund in two separate payments from mid-April. You need to make an application for this payment through the ATO on www.my.gov.au. Make sure you get advice before you do as this may affect the insurance covers your super fund provides and it will definitely impact your future retirement benefits.

The ETU does not recommend members raiding their retirement savings and this will have an even greater effect on apprentices and those at the beginning of their working lives.

Income Protection/Assistance Schemes

Income Protection may be a condition of your employment. You may have access to income protection or assistance schemes for apprentices suffering financial hardship. Please check internally with your Organiser to see what is available for apprentices.