



**TED O'BRIEN MP**  
Federal Member for Fairfax

## Q&A on Support for Businesses

The Government has announced further decisions over recent days in response to COVID-19.

Here are answers to some of the most common questions that business owners are asking me:

**1. What do the new changes to industrial relations (IR) mean?**

In short, it means more flexibility. As the Prime Minister announced yesterday, businesses employing people under hospitality, retail and clerk's awards will be possible to reduce minimum hours, have people work from home, move duties being performed across different classifications, and have more flexibility with annual leave. For the vast majority of awards (i.e. for 103 of 121 awards), it allows for two weeks of unpaid pandemic leave (e.g. if someone goes into isolation) and double duration of leave at half pay. [Details HERE.](#)

**2. Why are these (IR) changes being made?**

To accommodate COVID-19: firstly, because awards weren't set up for a pandemic (e.g. in some cases it was effectively illegal to work from home) and; secondly, because awards weren't designed to manage \$1,500 fortnight payments being offered via JobKeeper etc.

**3. Are these IR changes permanent or temporary?**

They're temporary – i.e. they will last as long as the crisis lasts.

**4. Is it true that child care is now free?**

Yes - the Prime Minister and Education Minister announced changes to the childcare and early childhood education sector yesterday. Free childcare will be available from Monday 6 April for all working families. Details of the new scheme are available [HERE.](#)

**5. When can we get clarity on the technical aspects of the new JobKeeper program?**

After next Wednesday (8 April) once the Parliament passes the relevant legislation.

**6. What's the latest on commercial leases?**

The Prime Minister explained today that an industry code-of-practice is being developed and will be enshrined in state legislation. While still a work-in-progress, it'll be a mandatory code with protections for both landlords and tenants, based on a principle of "proportionality" (i.e. tenant's turnover reduction should be accounted for in rental negotiations). Mandatory negotiations may be required for all businesses with a turnover less than \$50 million that are involved in the JobKeeper program. For now, we just need to await the code of practice.

**7. Is my businesses still permitted to stay open?**

The National Cabinet makes these decisions based on advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and Chief Medical Officers from around Australia. For a summary of their latest decisions – click [HERE.](#)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ted O'Brien'.

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