

# Queensland Ambulance Service Scheduled Absence Policy

Version: 1.0

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Valid To: 30-06-2012

Contact: Deputy Commissioner, QAS



## Purpose

To ensure that:

- Sufficient employees are available to provide adequate operational coverage;
- Award provisions in relation to leave and accrued time off are met; and
- Training obligations including the up-skilling of existing employees is achievable without compromising either service delivery or prudent financial management.

Implementing this policy will assist Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) to achieve a workable ratio between supply (available employees) and demand (roster requirements).

## Rationale

All employees of the QAS are entitled to access leave entitlements on an equitable basis. It is the responsibility of the QAS to provide this access whilst at the same time preserving the integrity of a minimum staffing framework to maintain an effective service delivery model sufficient to meet anticipated demand for service.

## Application

This policy applies to all Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) operational employees.

**To implement this policy statement, please see procedure statement:**

- Queensland Ambulance Service Scheduled Absences Procedure

## Policy Statement

This policy addresses the following five sections:

- Regional Management of Scheduled Absences
- Scheduled Absence Framework

## Applying for Leave/ Scheduled Absence

- Staffing During Scheduled Absences
- Accrued Time

## Regional Management of Scheduled Absences

1.

Regions are responsible for scheduling in advance all leave and training provisions in a manner that:

- Provides for long term planning of leave and access to training;
- Ensures maintenance of approved workforce planning models;
- Ensures leave requirements are met;
- Decreases excess leave; and
- Allows for clear identification and delineation of scheduled absences, including annual leave, long service leave, accrued time or other leave.

2.

Leave is to be provided, wherever possible, in a flexible manner to:

- Meet employees needs; and
- Maintain service delivery, given specific operational demands such as peak demand periods.

3.

Regions will put in place a process for the coordination of leave requests to plan leave in advance and to ensure service delivery requirements are met.

4.

Employees are to apply for leave within the regional process timeframes to facilitate planning. Additional or amended leave applications can be processed outside of this process, subject to availability.

5.

Leave is not to be granted if to do so would compromise operational requirements or minimum training requirements.

6.

Regions may be in a position to approve some leave requests and not others because of maximum leave numbers being reached in certain weeks. Such conflicts are to be negotiated between the employee and the Region in accordance with the above parameters.

7.

Wherever feasible, Regions are to group employees (e.g. station, group of stations) to be “self-relieving”, to have the capacity to maintain rosters and provide for all scheduled leave requirements of that grouping. This allows for a culture of “self-management” as long as roster requirements are met at all times.

8.

Regions are to report on leave as part of a total overview of employee allocation for each pay period, including roster allocation, scheduled absences and unscheduled absences, along with excess leave balances.

9.

Where employees have excess leave or have failed to arrange for access to yearly leave entitlements the Region may direct employees to take leave in undersubscribed periods.

10.

Regions may negotiate with employees to ensure leave opportunities are maximized in a consistent manner. The number of employees on leave is to be evenly distributed and peaks and troughs are to be avoided.

## **Scheduled Absence Framework**

11.

All absences that are pre-planned in nature are classed as a scheduled absence. Scheduled absences include but are not exclusive of:

o

Accrued time off under clause 4.1 Hours of Work of the *Queensland Ambulance Service Enterprise Partnership Certified Agreement 2005* (EPA 2005);

o

Annual leave;

o

Long service leave;

o

Military leave;

o

Training (both regional and QCESA);

12.

A minimum of two weeks must be applied for by employees per leave period (i.e. 2, 3, 4 or 5 or more weeks) and different types of leave cannot be combined during a pay period. There is no maximum period of scheduled absence.

13.

All leave is to commence on a Monday, however, an employee may request an alternative start date. All leave requests will be considered, provided that:

o

Sufficient leave exists to grant the leave;

o

Maximum amount of leave capacity is not exceeded;

o

There is operational capacity to allow the leave;

o

Three month roster projection requirements are met for all employees (except for emergent and unforeseen circumstances approved by the region).

14.

Managers are to implement and use the Scheduled Absence Planner for managing scheduled absences.

15.

All leave must be taken within the scheduled absence framework.

16.

Under exceptional circumstances, leave outside these blocks may be approved by the Regional Assistant Commissioner should such absence not compromise the ability of the QAS to staff and maintain a cost effective service delivery model.

17.

Regions are responsible for ensuring fairness and equity to all employees when managing scheduled

absences as well as maintaining sufficient resources to meet QAS operational requirements.

## **Applying for Leave**

18.

Leave and training are important elements of employment in that they enable an employee to rest, recuperate from, and maintain preparedness for, the effective performance of duty.

19.

Employees of the QAS are entitled to leave of absence in accordance with the relevant industrial instruments covering the classification under which the employee is employed.

20.

All employees may apply for and will be allocated leave in accordance with this policy and associated procedures for managing scheduled absences.

21.

All employees are responsible for working with their supervisors to ensure that leave entitlements are accessed to maintain their personal health and well-being.

## **Staffing during scheduled absence**

22.

Each individual work unit (Station or Cluster) must maintain the minimum staffing level required to accommodate the daily rostering requirement.

23.

Where possible all stations are to be self-relieving for the purpose of scheduled absences.

24.

Work units are to maintain an appropriate skill level (i.e. appropriate skill mix of Qualified to Student ratio) during scheduled absences.

25.

Employees on scheduled leave are not to be engaged in any capacity to undertake duties during their leave except in emergent circumstances.

## **Accrued time**

26.

Accrued time is to be taken in a manner that “banked” accrued time does not exceed 104 hours or negative balance is never greater than negative 104 hours.

## Superseded Policies

- QAS – Regional Leave Policies

## Links to Relevant Legislation, Policy and Guidelines

### Legislative Authority:

- *Ambulance Service Act 1991*
- *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977*
- *Industrial Relations Act 1999*
- *Public Records Act 2002*

### Related Legislation or Standards

- *Ambulance Service Employees' Award 2003*
- *Queensland Ambulance Service Enterprise Partnership Certified Agreement 2005*

### Related Government Guidelines

### Related Departmental Policy and Other Documents

#### Queensland Ambulance Service

- *QAS Employee Entitlements Reference Guide 2006*

## Glossary

Word	Definition
<b>Accrued Time</b>	<p>Time accrued by employees under the provisions of the <i>Queensland Ambulance Service Enterprise Partnership Certified Agreement 2005</i> in relation to the 38 hour week provisions. Commencing 1 October 2007, an accrued time balance calculated on the basis of 2 hours per week (104 hours per annum) will be initiated.</p> <p>Unlike annual leave and long service leave, accrued time will be debited on an hour for hour basis (7 x 10 hours shifts off = 70 hours debited). Accrued time does not attract leave loading but does attract projected penalties in addition to projected shift allowances.</p>
<b>Accrued Time Balance</b>	<p>The accrued balance of time in hours available for access by an employee. Unlike leave balance, accrued time may, as deemed appropriate by the Leave Manager, have a negative balance of up to 104 hours.</p>

<b>Annual Leave</b>	Annual leave accrued under the provisions of the relevant industrial instruments pertaining to each particular employee. Annual leave is both accumulated and debited in days, with 5 days constituting 1 week. Annual leave may, at the option of the officer and the consent of the QAS, be allowed to accumulate for 2 years but for no longer. Annual leave attracts leave loading and / or projected penalties in addition to projected shift allowances.
<b>Annual Leave Balance</b>	The accrued balance in days of annual leave available for access by an employee. Annual leave balance can not be a “negative” balance.
<b>Authorised Officer</b>	Regional Assistant Commissioners or their delegates are authorised to approve annual leave or accrued time off. Unless such delegation is granted, Managers or OIC’s cannot approve annual leave or accrued time off.
<b>Deferment of Leave</b>	The holding over or deferment of an employees leave entitlement to a later date following agreement in writing between the employer and the employee. Deferment of leave is not automatic upon request by either party, but is considered in conjunction with other factors including operational requirements.
<b>Discretionary Training</b>	Training which whilst important and necessary, has some flexibility in relation to timing, examples would include skills updates, 4WD driver training.
<b>Leave Block</b>	A defined period within the scheduled absence planner with pre determined commencement and completion dates. A minimum of two weeks must be taken per leave block and different types of leave cannot be combined during a pay period. There is no maximum period of leave that can be applied for.
<b>Leave Manager</b>	Officer responsible for coordinating the Region/Area scheduled absence planner.
<b>Leave Without Pay (LWOP)</b>	Leave granted to an employee on an unpaid basis.
<b>Long Service Leave</b>	Long service leave accrued under the provisions of the relevant industrial instruments pertaining to each particular employee. QAS operational employees accrue 13 weeks for 10 years’ continuous service which is equivalent to 6.5 days leave per year of effective service. Long service leave may be accessed on completion of 7 years effective service on a pro rata basis. As with annual leave, long service leave is debited by days, with 5 days constituting 1 week.
<b>Major/Special Events</b>	Events that require roster coverage over and above that rostered on a daily basis. Examples would include major festivals and sporting events such as Schoolies celebrations and the INDY Grand Prix.
<b>Obligatory Training</b>	Training which has a contractual obligation on behalf of the QAS such as the Student Paramedic program.

<b>Overtime</b>	<p>Overtime is all work performed outside of normal rostered hours and attracts overtime payments in accordance with QAS industrial instruments. Employees on scheduled leave are not to be engaged in any capacity to undertake duties during their leave except in emergent circumstances.</p> <p>Employees undertaking overtime on annual or long service leave will have the period of recall credited to the appropriate leave balance. Employees undertaking overtime on their accrued time off are to be paid the appropriate overtime rate in addition to their ordinary hours.</p>
<b>Scheduled Absence</b>	Any absence whether paid or unpaid which has either a contractual requirement (e.g. Student Diploma Obligatory Training) and/or is able to be prescheduled in advance (e.g. annual leave, long service leave, military leave, accrued time off and Regional Based Training).
<b>Unscheduled Absence</b>	Absences which by their very nature are not able to pre planned at least 12 months in advance or at the time the annual Scheduled Absence Plan is published. Examples include sick leave, compassionate leave, and family leave etc.

## For Assistance Contact

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