

Queensland Ambulance Service Scheduled Absence Procedure

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Contact: Deputy Commissioner, QAS



Purpose

This procedure assists regions to implement a Scheduled Absence Planner that incorporates annual leave, accrued time, long service, military leave, QCESA and Regional Training.

The Scheduled Absence Leave Planner can be used for other types of leave, such as maternity leave and leave without pay (LWOP), once dates are confirmed.

Direct Policy Reference	Related Procedures
Queensland Ambulance Scheduled Absences Policy	Applying for Leave – Scheduled Absence - QAS

Procedure

This procedure addresses the following eight sections:

- Scheduled Absence Framework
- Training
- Leave Options
- Application Process
- Approval Process
- Cancellation or changes to Leave
- Reporting Process
- Responsibilities

Refer to the Glossary for interpretation of terms used in this procedure.

Scheduled Absences Framework

1.

Each Region is required to develop and maintain a Scheduled Absence Planner and reporting tool to cater for leave and training requirements.

2.

Regions must maintain correct staffing establishment to ensure efficient management of any scheduled

absences.

3.

Any scheduled major event which will require staffing/Roster allocations over and above normal rostering requirements other than routing sporting specials, should be incorporated into the Scheduled Absence Planner.

4.

All leave must be taken within the scheduled absences framework outlined in the Queensland Ambulance Service Scheduled Absences Policy.

Training

5.

Training commitments are defined as **obligatory** and/or **discretionary**.

6.

Obligatory training should be inputted into the Scheduled Absence Planner prior to leave commitments being finalised.

7.

Discretionary training should be scheduled during periods of least demand for leave and obligatory training.

8.

Managers are to make every effort to align training commitments and programmed leave timeframes. Where possible, managers are to modify training schedules to achieve this alignment.

9.

Whenever possible training should not be scheduled during periods of high demand for leave such as school holidays and the Christmas and New Year period.

Leave Options

10. An employee may apply to take a minimum of two weeks leave in one consecutive period.

Annual Leave

11.

An employee may apply to take annual leave up to a maximum permitted by accrued annual leave balance in one consecutive period.

12.

Annual leave may run consecutively with accrued time, however, an individual pay period **cannot**

contain a combination of accrued time and annual Leave.

13.

Annual leave may, at the option of the employee concerned and with the consent of the employer, be allowed to accumulate for 2 years but for no longer period, and may be taken in no more than 2 periods.

Accrued Time

14.

An employee may apply to take accrued time leave in one consecutive period.

15.

Employees must access **at least** two-weeks accrued time per year with the remaining balance not to exceed 104 hours.

16.

Accrued time may run consecutively with annual leave, however, an individual pay period **cannot** contain a combination of accrued time and annual Leave.

17.

Accrued time off may not be deferred. The accumulated balance of accrued time off is not to exceed 104 hours. Accrued time may be approved in advance of entitlement with the negative balance not to exceed 104 hours.

18.

If employees have not applied for accrued time off, the appropriate manager may require the officer to access a 2 week block of accrued time off in order to reduce the accumulated balance to a level not exceeding 104 hours.

Application Process (Including Deferral of Leave)

19.

The Regional Scheduled Absences Planner for the following calendar year should be made available to employees in April of each year for a period of at least 8 weeks.

20.

Employees seeking to defer annual leave must apply in writing to the appropriate Manager. All applications must provide reasons for the deferral together with supporting evidence.

21.

All applications to the Region for leave under the Scheduled Absences Policy and Procedure should be submitted using the approved leave form - Application for Leave.

22.

All employees are required to submit leave applications indicating each individual leave period required.

23.

Employees who fail to submit an application will be offered a choice from those leave blocks not fully subscribed.

24.

Where leave nominations remain outstanding, leave may be allocated by the appropriate manager, in accordance with the Scheduled Absences Policy.

25.

Should blocks requested be oversubscribed, Regions will undertake an equitable process to determine who should take leave.

Approval Process

26.

When the leave applications are received and the Scheduled Absence Planner is updated, applications for those blocks not oversubscribed may be approved by the Assistant Commissioner or delegate.

27.

Applications for blocks that are oversubscribed are to be returned to station level for consultation, negotiation and amendment.

28.

Employees will be notified by mail or email as to the result of their application for leave and are then required to complete the approved leave form - Leave Notification to PartnerOne, which includes a projected roster form. This form is to be provided to the employees OIC or supervisor.

29.

Once approved, all leave is to be entered into a central database at either a Station, Area or Regional level.

Cancellation or Changes to Approved Leave

30.

Once published, changes to the regional Scheduled Absence Planner should be reduced to a minimum to avoid any disruption to planned training and leave.

31.

All requests to change or cancel approved leave blocks must be submitted in writing and must be accompanied by a leave request for alternative blocks. Except for emergent circumstances, a minimum of 15 weeks notice should be given.

In the event that the service cannot accommodate a change of leave blocks, employees may negotiate an exchange of blocks with another employee from within the same work unit subject to the authorised officers' approval. Care must be taken to ensure that the appropriate skills mix is maintained.

33.

Should employees wish to exchange leave blocks with an employee from another work unit, approval should be subject to operational requirements as determined by the Assistant Commissioner or Delegate. Where possible, such exchanges should be cost neutral to the service.

34.

Requests to exchange blocks must be accompanied by a written application for the alternative blocks by both parties to the exchange.

35.

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

36.

Employees undertaking overtime on annual leave 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.

Reporting Process

37.

The Region will compile a summary of Officers who are absent on leave from the Region/Area for the entire leave block and forward to Partner One Payroll. This will be completed by COB on the last working day prior to the block commencement date. These officers will not be required to complete a timesheet for that leave block.

38.

The summary will include details relating to type of leave, projected penalties and leave loading for the employees whilst on leave.

39.

The summary will include a section for those Officers accessing multiple blocks and provision for amendments to leave already taken, e.g. re-credit of annual leave and debiting of sick leave to compensate employees who became ill during annual leave and wish to access sick leave.

40.

Employees who are not absent for the complete block are required to submit a timesheet detailing hours worked together with details of all leave taken within that pay fortnight. Leave will be debited direct from this approved timesheet.

41.

The Application for Leave Form will be used primarily as an internal regional tool for planning and audit purposes and will be retained in the region. No approved leave applications are required to be forwarded to PartnerOne for leave debiting purposes.

42.

The Region may choose to enter the leave of employees who work Monday to Friday, do not receive Penalties/ Overtime and do not submit a fortnightly time sheet onto the fortnightly leave summary or arrange alternatives procedures with PartnerOne.

Responsibilities

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

Officers must:

- Read the QAS Scheduled Absence Policy and Procedure.
- Apply for all leave and notify of approved leave in accordance with the policy.
- Ensure that leave and travel plans including booking of fares and accommodation are not completed prior to leave approval. The QAS can accept no responsibility for cancellation of travel plans completed prior to the finalisation of the Regions Scheduled Absence planner.
- Retain a copy of the leave application form and subsequent leave approval notification.

Managers must:

- Maintain a Regional Scheduled Absences Planner.
- Ensures fairness and equity to all employees applying for leave.
- Maintain sufficient resources to ensure QAS operational requirements are met.
- Ensure all mandatory training requirements in relation to employees are accommodated within the Scheduled Absences Planner.
- Ensure that all accrued leave entitlements are accessed in a timely manner.
- Ensure that all Reporting requirements in **Sections 1 and 4** relating to the publishing of the Schedule Absences Planner within work units are complied with.

Assistant Commissioners must:

- Give immediate consideration to compassionate leave requests.
- Ensure that the Regional Scheduled Absence Plan maintains sufficient resources to meet QAS operational requirements.
- Ensure that all award entitlements in relation to leave of absence are accessed in a timely manner.

The Deputy Commissioner must:

- Ensure that the Regional Scheduled Absences Planners maintain sufficient resources to meet QAS operational requirements.

Flowcharts

Flowchart 1: Scheduled Absence Approval Process

List of Forms

- Application for Leave
- Leave Notification to PartnerOne

Superseded Procedures

- Region Scheduled Absence Procedure

Glossary

Word	Definition
Accrued Time	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. 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.
Accrued Time Balance	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.
Annual Leave	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.
Annual Leave Balance	The accrued balance in days of annual leave available for access by an employee. Annual leave balance can not be a "negative" balance.
Authorised Officer	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.
Deferment of Leave	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.
Discretionary Training	Training which whilst important and necessary, has some flexibility in relation to timing, examples would include skills updates, 4WD driver training.

Leave Block	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.
Leave Manager	Officer responsible for coordinating the Region/Area scheduled absence planner.
Leave Without Pay (LWOP)	Leave granted to an employee on an unpaid basis.
Long Service Leave	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.
Major/Special Events	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.
Obligatory Training	Training which has a contractual obligation on behalf of the QAS such as the Student Paramedic program.
Overtime	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.
Scheduled Absence	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).
Unscheduled Absence	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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