

## Media Release

Thursday 19 May 2016

### **Mental health nurses start red shirt action in bid to win nurse patient ratios**

Victorian public sector mental health nurses will start wearing red T-shirts in the workplace today as part of the first stage of protected industrial action to secure better patient workload management, improve patient/client care and achieve pay parity with their nursing colleagues in the public aged care and acute hospitals.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) is currently negotiating a new mental health nurses enterprise agreement with the Victorian Government, the employers' representative, the Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association (VHIA) and the Health and Community Services Union.

The agreement expired on 31 March 2016. Negotiations began in February. The general public sector nurses and midwives agreement was finalised on 5 May.

Nurses will start wearing #ValueRecogniseReward red T-shirts and handing out campaign information to clients, family and friends from 7am today in 12 mental health services\* across the state. (\*See next page for a list of facilities.)

Mental health nurses are seeking the introduction of nurse patient ratios in inpatient services and a community workload management mechanism for community mental health nurses.

Ratios would vary according to type of ward/unit and time of day. Examples of the ANMF's ratio claim include:

- high dependency beds - 1 nurse to 2 patients
- adult acute beds - morning and afternoon shift 1:4, night shift 1:7
- acute child, adolescent and youth beds – morning and afternoon shift 1:4, night shift 1:5
- Forensic acute beds – morning and afternoon shift 1:4 plus in charge, night shift 1:7.

The ANMF claim, including all of the ratios, can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/MHloc16>

Mental health nurses are also seeking the same pay rises, between 4 and 20 per cent, achieved in the public acute sector agreement earlier this month.

The current VHIA and government wage offer is 2.5 per cent per year plus an additional 0.5 per cent for service delivery improvements.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick said: "Implementing nurse patient ratios in our inpatient mental health services will provide certainty around staffing levels and really improve mental health nurses' ability to provide quality care for often very complex patients.

"Mandated ratios were implemented in our public aged care and acute hospital wards and units 16 years ago. They have worked so well to improve patient care, reduce preventable complications and deaths, prevent understaffing and reduce the cost of filling unplanned vacancies and have prevented nurse and midwife shortages that they are now law.

**ANMF EBA 2016**

Nurses, Midwives and Mental Health Nurses

**VALUE RECOGNISE REWARD**



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“It is nonsensical that a ward caring for patients with a physical injury or illness has a mandated, minimum nurse patient ratio. But a ward, in the same hospital, has no such staffing guarantee for patients with an acute mental illness.

“Community mental health nurses are doing amazing work keeping clients well and living at home but they also need a sophisticated workload management tool that lets them spend more time caring for people.

A statewide ANMF (Vic Branch) members meeting held on Monday 9 May called on the parties to expedite serious and productive negotiations.

“ANMF has made itself available day and night, seven days a week, to resolve this agreement and not jeopardise back pay to 1 April and we call on the other parties to do the same,” Ms Fitzpatrick said.

### **Mental health workplaces where protected industrial action CAN commence from 7.00am Thursday 19 May 2016 (stage 1):**

#### **Albury Wodonga Health**

North East Border Mental Health Services  
All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Ballarat Health Services**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Barwon Health**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Eastern Health**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Goulburn Valley Health**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Latrobe Regional Health**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Melbourne Health**

North Western Mental Health  
All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Mercy Public Health**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Mildura Base Hospital**

Mental Health Services  
All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Royal Children’s Hospital**

Banksia Unit  
All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **St Vincent’s Hospital**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

#### **Inner South Community Mental Health**

All areas where mental health nurses are employed

ENDS

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