



**Australian
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Media Release

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Hobsons Bay City nurses call on council to return to talks with respectful offer

Hobsons Bay City Council's maternal and child health and immunisation nurses are taking protected industrial action in response to the council's refusal to make a respectful offer to improve wages and conditions.

Negotiations between the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) and the council began in January.

Talks have reached a stalemate with ANMF claiming a 2.5 per cent per annum wage rise over a four-year agreement.

The council is offering a three-year agreement with 2.5 per cent in the first year and two per cent in the second and third years. Hobsons Bay City Council's nurses are paid between 4.5 and 11 per cent less than maternal and child health and immunisation nurses in other council areas.

An open ballot of all employees, conducted by the council last month, rejected their employer's current proposal.

The council has put the same offer to ballot again between 12 to 20 December. ANMF is recommending its members vote 'no' and reject the substandard offer.

ANMF is also seeking the inclusion of the 2016 Local Government Nurses Award into the agreement. This would increase the nurses' annual leave entitlements from four to five weeks which is the standard for Victorian nurses. Nurses have offered to exchange an 'end of band' payment for the leave entitlement so the real additional cost to Council would only be two extra days.

The first phase of protected industrial action began on 9 December and includes wearing red campaign T-shirts, distributing campaign material, a limitation on consults for children aged 12 months and older and a ban on overtime, administrative tasks and updating data.

The action affects 11 maternal and child health centres across the council area.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick said: "ANMF is calling on the council to return to the negotiating table to resolve the dispute with a respectful offer.

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“Nurses only take action as a last resort and they’re extremely disappointed the council shows no understanding of the value of this critical primary health care service nor does it recognise the nurses’ claims are modest and fair.

“These nurses reduce and prevent serious and expensive health and social problems by providing parents, babies and their families with support, education and advice. This includes confidential referrals to assist parents and children in a domestic violence situation or exposed to distress caused by financial, disability, mental health or new migrant and language issues,” Ms Fitzpatrick said.

The Andrews Government recently provided the council with a 15.9 per cent increase in funding for maternal and child health services. Council has not outlined how it will spend the additional money.

ENDS

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