



**Australian
Nursing &
Midwifery
Federation**
VICTORIAN BRANCH

Newsflash

COVID-19 information for private and not-for-profit aged care members

Monday 20 July 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) Update #16

Further aged care COVID-19 announcements

Many members will be aware that the Victorian Government, in their COVID-19 updates over the weekend, spoke of 'cohorting' of aged care employees as a strategy to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

Cohorting of employees means that each aged care employee can only work at one work site – i.e. one aged care facility. At this time, it is being contemplated only for aged care sites in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, and only for 8 weeks. It is likely to extend longer, and geographically further, before the COVID-19 situation is under control. It may also extend to provision of aged care in people's own homes.

ANMF (Vic Branch) has been in discussions with employers over the weekend to gain a better understanding of how they see cohorting working – with some providers well advanced in their plans. It is not a matter of 'if' cohorting will be introduced but 'when' and under what conditions.

As we have experienced already, some providers are seeking to require employees to only work for their organisation, which would still allow an employee to work at multiple sites operated by that employer. Some are simply making demands, and expecting their employees to comply, without regard for those who rely on two or three jobs to make ends meet. Such directions may not be lawful and have a damaging flow-on effect to other aged care providers.

This new proposal is different in significant ways:

1. It is being developed in consultation with the ANMF and other unions, along with the federal and Victorian governments
2. It aims to take a whole-of-sector approach to management of affected employees, rather than leaving it to the employee to manage the consequences of the direction

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3. Mechanisms are proposed to secure the employee's jobs with other employers during the cohorting – including protection of accrued entitlements and continuity of service
4. Systems are evolving to ensure affected employees are (as much as possible) not disadvantaged in the short or longer term.

ANMF (Vic Branch) will have more to say later today about this, following further meetings commencing today. ANMF is also exploring the impact on casual and agency staff, and how this impact can be addressed.

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