



**Australian
Nursing &
Midwifery
Federation**
VICTORIAN BRANCH

Newsflash

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

Wednesday 22 July 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Restrictions on working at more than one aged care site frequently asked questions

Members working in residential aged care will be familiar with the increasing spread of COVID-19 in the community, and a number of recent cases of community-acquired COVID-19 being spread into more than one aged care facility by staff members who works across more than one worksite. With the virus being infectious before the onset of symptoms, and in some reported cases without the person ever having symptoms, steps must be taken to protect those we care for.

What if I have symptoms?

If you cannot attend work due to COVID-19 symptoms, awaiting test results or you are in isolation, and are not entitled to take sick leave, **call 1800 675 398** for access to the Victorian Government's one-off payment of up to \$1500.

For more information about how government is supporting Victoria's aged care residents and nurses, carers and other aged care staff read Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt's media release <https://bit.ly/3juZlyX>

What is being proposed?

The ANMF, along with other key stakeholders and government, have held discussions over recent days about how to manage the proposed 'cohorting' of aged care employees as part of the strategy to reduce the spread of the COVID-19.

The discussions occurred because the Victorian Government foreshadowed an intention to make a directive that cohorting of aged care employees must occur within metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire.

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What is cohorting?

Cohorting is a system where each aged care employee works at only one site for a period, currently eight weeks. This time period may be extended.

Similarly, if the Victorian Government declared an extension of COVID-19 lockdown into other areas of Victoria, these principles would be extended to those areas.

What will happen?

Impacted employees will be invited to nominate a single aged facility (one of the sites you currently work at) to be your primary workplace.

Your 'elected primary workplace' is the single site at which you elect to work all your shifts, including those previously worked at other sites.

Who is impacted?

Employees (including casual employees) of residential aged care who work at more than one residential aged care site, where one of those sites is in either metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire. You can see a map of the affected areas on the Department of Health and Human Services' website via bit.ly/3hroSwW

Please note that if you work at multiple residential aged care sites, some in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire and some not, and you choose as your primary workplace a site that is **not** in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire, these commitments and guarantees do not apply.

Who is not impacted?

An employee who only ever works at one residential aged care facility

An employee who does not live or work in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire.

An employee who lives in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire but does not work in residential aged care situated in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire.

When will this commence?

Residential aged care employers are expected to commence the process of cohorting from Monday 27 July 2020 and implementation of the changes will take place as soon as practicable.

The changes will initially be for a fixed term of 8 weeks from Monday 27 July until 25 September 2020.

What happens with my other jobs in residential aged care?

Your other employer/s must:

1. grant you unpaid single site leave for the duration of the period.
2. preserve your accrued annual leave and personal leave

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3. keep your job open for you to return to at the conclusion of the period
4. ensure that the period unpaid single site leave is treated as service for long service leave purposes.

Will I be financially worse off?

An impacted employee will not be worse off financially.

In the first instance your primary employer must pay you for all your usual hours, including those you usually work at your other residential aged care sites

Your primary employer may offer you those same shifts, if practicable. If they cannot, or do not, you must be paid your usual hours regardless. You can agree to work different shift patterns than you would usually work, but you are not obliged to.

Can ANMF assist me?

ANMF members will be provided representation to ensure this process works as intended.

Please ensure your membership details are up to date, particularly the number of hours you work per week, by going to the ANMF member portal anmfvic.asn.au/memberportal

To be entitled to representation you must be paying the correct category of membership, which is at two levels depending on the number of hours you work per week.

ANMF will work closely with the Federal Government-funded employer 'Support Hubs' to work through any implementation issues.

Do you have a general question about 'cohorting'?

If you have a general question in relation to COVID-19 matters or the 'cohorting' arrangements, please contact ANMF via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance

Do you believe you are being disadvantaged and require assistance?

If you require individual assistance because you believe you are being disadvantaged, please contact ANMF via anmfvic.asn.au/dualemployment

ANMF encourages members to raise any concerns they have with management in the first instance as quickly as possible in addition to seeking assistance from ANMF.

What if I don't elect to nominate a primary work site?

The process as the moment is optional, but that is likely to change. ANMF strongly encourages members to make the election as soon as possible to ensure that you are protected should the Chief Health Officer make this mandatory.

It was possible to argue that a direction by an employer that you only work for them, or at only one site, was neither lawful nor reasonable. It would also have had an unmanageable impact on the whole sector. However, circumstances are changing rapidly and the impact on those we work with, and care for, must be addressed.

This process seeks to ensure it occurs with proper consideration of the impact on individuals, and the sector more broadly.

Who can be a member of ANMF?

Registered nurses, enrolled nurses and personal care staff can all be members of ANMF. Please encourage your colleagues to join. Joining ANMF is quick and easy - membership can be completed online at anmfvic.asn.au/join

Matters that are still being determined

The agreement between the ANMF, providers and their representatives, and government is something that will evolve.

The following are unresolved issues:

1. An employee works at a residential aged care facility and also works for an agency doing additional shifts. At this point the agreement does not cover that circumstance.
2. An employee works at a residential aged care facility and also works providing aged care in people's homes.
3. Agency staff working across multiple sites.
4. Discussions will continue to seek to address these situations, and other issues as they arise.

Got a colleague not receiving ANMF emails?

If you have an ANMF colleague who is not receiving these COVID-19 newsflash emails, please pass this on and let them know they can re-subscribe via anmfvic.asn.au/resubscribe

Please display this newsflash on your workplace noticeboard.

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