



ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

Building works and workplace design of healthcare facilities

1. Introduction

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Vic Branch) (ANMF (Vic Branch)) recognises that:

- (a) Some nurses, midwives and carers working in healthcare environments and other industries may experience construction, renovation, redesign, retrofitting or refurbishment (building work; and
- (b) Upon completion of these building works, the workplace design of the facility may create a risk to the health and safety of nurses and midwives working in them.

2. Objective

The ANMF (Vic Branch) objective is to support the prevention and management of risks to the health and safety of Victorian nurses, midwives and carers during all stages of the design process for any facility in which nurses or midwives work or are intended to work.

3. Scope

This policy applies to ANMF (Vic Branch) members, and all nurses, midwives and carers eligible for ANMF (Vic Branch) membership, in Victorian healthcare environments and other industries.

4. Definitions

CPTED - Crime Prevention Through Environment Design

Major building works - any works that require structural change, a building permit, asbestos removal or remediation, or may cause significant disruption and/or impact on the local work area and environmental hazards such as dust, noise or vibration.

5. Policy

- 5.1 Under the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, all employees have a right to perform their work in an environment that is safe and without risks to health from exposure to construction and renovations in Victorian healthcare facilities.
- 5.2 Where building works are proposed, occupational health and safety issues must be identified and resolved at the design stage in consultation with Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and the ANMF (Vic Branch), in accordance with relevant:
 - OHS Legislation, Regulations, Codes, Guidelines and State of Knowledge
 - Building Legislation and Standards
 - Accreditation Standards and Guidelines
 - Capital Development and Design Guidelines
 - Enterprise Agreements
- 5.3 The most effective means of creating a healthy and safe working environment is to eliminate hazards and risks during the design of new or refurbished healthcare facilities.
- 5.4 Where not reasonably practicable to eliminate hazards and risks through design, then as far as reasonably practicable, the use of appropriate controls to reduce health and safety risk should be implemented.

- 5.5 The prevention and management of risks to the health and safety of Victorian nurses, midwives and carers should be considered during all stages of the design process. The design process includes but is not limited to, design brief preparation, feasibility, contract documentation, construction and post-occupancy evaluation.
- 5.6 Anticipating patient / resident handling needs is particularly important in the design of health and aged care facilities to ensure optimum safety for nurses, midwives and carers. Employers must meet spatial requirements and layouts for bedrooms, bathrooms / ensuites, toilets, corridors, door widths and heights, floor surfaces, lighting, and storage space for equipment.
- 5.7 CPTED is an equally important consideration when designing new or refurbished health and aged care facilities. CPTED principles should be applied to eliminate or reduce the risk of violence and aggression towards nurses and midwives.
- 5.8 Designers, architects, planners or other experts or consultants who are engaged to develop plans / designs, should have appropriate expertise in the design of health and aged care facilities, including knowledge of and ability to comply with all relevant information and standards, and this should be included specifically in their design brief, including reference to OHS legislative obligations; eg - Section 28 Duties of Designers of buildings or structures (OHS Act, 2004).
- 5.9 Hazard analysis should be undertaken before construction and renovation in consultation with Health and Safety Representatives and the ANMF (Vic Branch).
- 5.10 Major building works should not proceed whilst staff and patients / residents inhabit the building or ward / unit.
- 5.11 If relocation is involved, staff must be provided with appropriate assistance for packing and removing. Nursing staff should not be required to move equipment and furniture.
- 5.12 Appropriate controls must be put into place to ensure that neither staff nor patients / residents are put at risk from asbestos and other hazardous substances, nor other hazards arising from the conduct of building works.
- 5.13 Safe design requirements should be incorporated into healthcare facilities' procurement arrangements and contracts to actively encourage suppliers to implement health and safety design practices, as well as, enabling healthcare facilities and the Victorian Government to use their investment and purchasing power to improve health and safety within healthcare facilities.
- 5.14 It is important to take a holistic approach when considering the prevention and management of risks to the health and safety of Victorian nurses, midwives and carers during all stages of the design process by not only considering the physical workplace design but the systems of work within the space.

6. Key elements

6.1 Healthcare design issues

Issues to consider in the design of healthcare facilities include but are not limited to:

- Space or appropriate layout to manoeuvre in bathrooms, ensuites and bedrooms
- Adequate door and passage width
- Suitable floor coverings, particularly carpets
- Storage space, including for patient handling related equipment
- Overhead tracking systems
- Adequate workplace amenities and facilities
- Prevention against violence and aggression CPTED
- Consultation and communication with stakeholders

6.2 Employers

Employers have a responsibility to actively work to provide a safe and healthy working environment that meets regulatory requirements and relevant accreditation standards.

ANMF (Vic Branch) requires employers to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with exposure to construction and renovation sites including by:

- Implementing safe design best practices
- Implementing a risk management approach to identify, assess and control hazards to employees during building works; eg - electrical works, dust, fumes, noise, manual handling and hazardous substances
- Communicating with employees during all stages of the design process and building works
- Consulting with Health and Safety Representatives and external stakeholders during all phases of the design process and building works
- Providing information, instruction and training to enable nurses, midwives and carers to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health during building works
- Providing managers and supervisors with the knowledge and skills to identify hazards and risks to health and safety as they may arise through the course of any works, and implement timely prevention and control strategies

6.3 Duties of designers

The OHS Act 2004 stipulates specific obligations on the designers of buildings or structures or part of buildings or structures to ensure that the design is safe and without risks to the health of people using it as a workplace.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 Occupational Health and Safety

ANMF (Vic Branch) recognises that major building works must involve consultation between a wide range of stakeholders including but not limited to, unions, employers, Health and Safety Representatives, employees, government bodies, Architects and planners or other experts.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, elected Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) of the work group(s) affected must be consulted on the OHS impacts of any proposed changes to the workplace, equipment or work performed.

ANMF (Vic Branch) expects that during all stages of the design process and during any building works:

6.4.1.1 The employer must notify HSRs before the planning / design stage where:

- New premises are planned
- Major building works are likely to occur
- Works are expected to take place which are likely to disrupt normal activities or affect patient / resident care in a facility

6.4.1.2 The input of Health and Safety Representatives and direct care staff should be facilitated through appropriate mechanisms, including through:

- Planning consultative committees which include HSRs from wards or units likely to be affected by any works
- The Health and Safety Committee, with HSR membership, which should provide input and feedback into design, planning and construction phases

6.4.1.3 HSRs must be consulted regarding design, potential hazards, appropriate control measures and / or the provision of suitable alternative accommodation while building works are carried out.

6.4.2 Industrial

Under many Enterprise Agreements employers are also required to provide a compliant written Change Impact Statement (CIS) to affected employee(s) and their Union(s) prior to the commencement of the industrial consultation process. Consultation must then be undertaken which meets the terms of the relevant industrial instruments, which may be in conjunction with or in addition to the OHS consultation. NB: industrial consultation usually does not meet the requirements of the consultation provisions of the OHS Act.

6.5 Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports involvement of HSRs in workplace design through:

- Reporting construction and design related issues to management
- Representation and consultation with employers
- Health and Safety Committee (HSC) formulation, review and dissemination of plans for prevention of workplace design
- Workplace OHS issue resolution
- Provisional Improvement Notices (PINs) or requests for WorkSafe Inspectors to attend the workplaces if the employers have not acted to resolve workplace design issues, after consultation with HSRs and employees

6.6 ANMF (Vic Branch) members

The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports involvement of members in workplace design through:

- Reporting construction and design related issues to management
- Consultation through HSRs on design-related issues

7. ANMF (Vic Branch) commitment

The ANMF (Vic Branch) will support the prevention of risks to the health and safety of Victorian nurses, midwives and carers during all stages of the design process through the Branch's occupational health and safety, professional and industrial activities.

8. Relevant legislation

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
- Building Act 1993
- Building Regulations 2018

9. Relevant Guidance

- Aged Care Quality Standards (<https://agedcare.health.gov.au/quality/aged-care-quality-standards>)
- ANMF (Vic Branch), Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- ANMF (Vic Branch), Safe Patient Handling Policy
- ANMF (Vic Branch), Prevention of Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy
- ANMF (Vic Branch), A 10 Point Plan to End Violence and Aggression
- Department of Human Services (DHS), Capital Development Guidelines – Series 7, 2013
- Australasian Health Facility Guidelines (<https://www.healthfacilityguidelines.com.au/>)
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards>)
- Nurses and Midwives (Victorian Public Health Sector) (Single Interest Employers) Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2016 – 2020, as revised
- Safe Work Australia, Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012 – 2022
- The Australian Building Codes Board, Building Code of Australia (BCA), 2019

- WorkSafe Victoria, A Guide to Designing Workplaces for Safer Handling of People, 2007
- WorkSafe Victoria, Designing Safer Buildings and Structures, 2005
- WorkSafe Victoria, Officewise – A Guide to Health and Safety in the Office, 2006
- WorkSafe Victoria, Transferring People Safely, 2009
- WorkSafe Victoria, Workplace Amenities and Work Environment - Compliance Code 2008
- WorkSafe Victoria, Prevention and management of aggression in health services handbook, 2017
- Victorian Government, Mitigating occupational violence and aggression through the built environment – A resource for architects and designers, 2019
- Victorian Public Sector Mental Health Services Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2016-2020, as revised