



## ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

### Fatigue prevention

#### 1. Introduction

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) (ANMF (Vic Branch)) recognises that work-related fatigue is a health and safety issue, which requires addressing from a risk management perspective.

#### 2. Objective

The ANMF (Vic Branch) objective is to support the strategic prevention and management of risks to the health and safety of Victorian nurses and midwives, arising from work-related fatigue.

#### 3. Scope

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

ANMF (Vic Branch) recognises that fatigue can be impacted by both work and non-work-related factors. This policy is limited to work-caused fatigue.

#### 4. Definitions

WorkSafe Victoria defines fatigue as:

*'an acute and / or ongoing state of tiredness that leads to mental or physical exhaustion and prevents people from functioning within normal boundaries'.<sup>1</sup>*

#### 5. Policy

- 5.1. Under the Victoria 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 the hazard of work-related fatigue
- 5.2. ANMF (Vic Branch) supports a risk management approach to work-related fatigue in consultation with Employees and Health and Safety Representatives
- 5.3. Where not reasonably practicable to eliminate work-related fatigue, then as far as reasonably practicable, the use of appropriate controls to reduce the risk of work-related fatigue should be implemented
- 5.4. ANMF (Vic Branch) will assist to prevent work-related fatigue through the Branch's occupational health and safety (OHS) and industrial activities

#### 6. Key elements

- 6.1. Work-related fatigue factors include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Mental and physical demands of work – eg concentration for extended periods of time, workload, inappropriate skill mix
  - ii. Work scheduling and planning – eg inadequate time to recover from work, roster patterns, length of shifts, timing of shifts, rest breaks, recovery time between shifts

---

<sup>1</sup> WorkSafe Victoria guidance publication – “Fatigue Prevention in the Workplace”, June 2017 (Edition 2), page 3

- iii. Working time – eg working at a time when workers are biologically programmed to sleep
- iv. Environmental conditions – eg working in uncomfortable environmental conditions
- v. Interaction with other hazards – eg the cumulative effects of muscle fatigue, strains and sprains
- vi. Systems of work
- vii. Work-related travel

## 6.2. Employers

ANMF (Vic Branch) requires employers to eliminate the risk of work-related fatigue. If not reasonably practicable, the Branch requires the risk of work-related fatigue be reduced by taking action, using strategic mitigations (to reduce the likelihood of fatigue occurring) and direct mitigations (to reduce the consequences when a nurse or midwife is fatigued at work), including:

Strategic mitigations:

- Implementing a risk management approach to identify, assess and control work-related fatigue factors
- Implementation of a Fatigue Management Policy
- Implementation of a Risk Management Plan
- Integration of fatigue prevention into workplace OHS arrangements - including into OHS representation, consultation and issue resolution
- Action plans which outline management responsibilities, timelines and resource allocation for fatigue prevention at workplace and organisation levels
- Information, instruction, training and supervision to enable nurses and midwives to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health from work-related fatigue
- Communication to raise understanding of fatigue risks, and associated prevention strategies
- Provision of knowledge and skills in fatigue identification, prevention, assessment and control strategies for managers and supervisors
- Eliminating and controlling excessive mental and physical demands
- Providing training and information to all employees on avoiding and recognising fatigue
- Ensuring appropriate roster design, considering:
  - a. Adequate nurse/midwife staffing
  - b. Adequate skill mix
  - c. Appropriate meal and rest breaks within shifts, recovery time between shifts, and rostering to recover from sleep debt
  - d. Predictable rosters which cover on-call
  - e. Distribution of days off to enable balance between work and non-work life matters
  - f. Forward shift rotation

Direct mitigations:

- Allowing facilities and processes for napping in a safe and recovery-orientated manner
- Providing systems for allowing nurses and midwives to safely self-identify, and clear actions to be considered to reduce risk of fatigue-related incidents, such as adjustment of work distribution / allocation

## 6.3. Consultation

The ANMF (Vic Branch) recognises that prevention of work-related fatigue must involve consultation between employers and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), where present and /or all employees.

Consultation must occur when:

- Identifying work related fatigue factors and assessing the associated risks
- Deciding how work-related fatigue is to be controlled, including proposing changes to work schedules and working procedures
- Developing and reviewing the Fatigue Management Plan
- Assessing training needs for nurses and midwives
- Proposing other changes to systems of work in the workplace, where these may have an impact on the risk of work related fatigue eg changes to skill mix

#### 6.4. Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports involvement of HSRs in prevention of work-related fatigue through:

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

#### 6.5. ANMF (Vic Branch) members

The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports involvement of members in the prevention of work-related fatigue through:

- Reporting fatigue issues to management and HSRs
- Consultation through HSRs on work-related fatigue control measures

### 7. ANMF (Vic Branch) commitment

- 7.1. The ANMF (Vic Branch) will support the prevention of work-related fatigue amongst nurses and midwives
- 7.2. The ANMF (Vic Branch) will assist to prevent work-related fatigue through the Branch's occupational health and safety (OHS) and industrial activities
- 7.3. The ANMF (Vic Branch) will endeavour to recognise and minimise the work-related causes of fatigue where possible in Industrial Agreements eg provision of 8/8/10 roster where appropriate

### 8. Relevant legislation

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

### 9. Relevant guidance

- ANMF(Vic Branch) Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- ANMF (Vic Branch) 12 Hour Work Roster Agreements Policy
- ANMF (Vic Branch) Permanent Night Shift Policy
- ANMF (Vic Branch) Self Rostering Guidelines Policy
- Fatigue prevention in the workplace, WorkSafe Victoria, June 2017 (Edition 2)
- Health and Safety Guidelines for Shift Work and Extended Working Hours, Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), September 2000
- National Code of Practice For Managing Nurses' Fatigue and Shift Work in District Health Board Hospitals, Sleep Wake Research Centre, Massey University, October 2019 (First Edition)