

Tuesday 12 May 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) Update #9

**Watch our COVID-19 Nurses Vigil; restrictions eased, but testing continues;
casual aged care nurses and carers eligible for retention payment**

Members are encouraged to read our newsflashes and the COVID-19 information for health workers provided on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Commonwealth Department of Health websites.

Information is updated regularly and at short notice. ANMF has collated the important links all in one place, so you don't have to go looking. Please bookmark and check this page regularly – anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19

Members with COVID-19-related employment questions can ask via the Member Assistance online inquiry form via anmfvic.asn.au/covid-19. Please read through the information on our website before submitting a question. Member Assistance is no longer taking phone inquiries as ANMF staff are now working remotely. Members with complex inquiries will still have phone contact with staff.

ANMF has written to all private, not-for-profit, local government and stand-alone community health centre employers urging them to follow the DHHS advice in the Coronavirus Guidance Note on Employment-Related Matters (bit.ly/2UhDSU2). This document was last updated on 7 May.

Latest coronavirus statistics in Victoria

As of 11 May 2020, the Victorian Chief Health Officer reported:

- the state's number of COVID-19 cases was 1496 – an increase of 7 since the day before.
- 7 people are in Victorian hospitals with COVID-19, including 5 in intensive care. Eighteen people have died.
- 161 cases have an unknown source of infection, an increase of 4 since the day before.
- 1,360 people have recovered. More than 245,000 tests have been completed.

View the latest Victorian statistics via bit.ly/34Et8Ug and the latest national statistics via bit.ly/2RyEXX1

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

International Nurses Day: light a candle to honour our overseas nurse colleagues who have lost their lives treating and caring for COVID-19 patients

Members are invited to light a candle and watch our COVID-19 Nurses Vigil at 7pm, tonight (Tuesday 12 May) on our Facebook, Instagram or Twitter channels via @anmfvic

Members can register their interest on the Facebook COVID-19 Nurses Vigil event via bit.ly/2yBmtPt and you'll get a reminder to watch.

Federal ANMF is co-ordinating the pre-recorded vigil for Australian and New Zealand nurses and midwives to honour our overseas colleagues who have lost their lives treating and caring for COVID-19 patients.

ANMF was overwhelmed by the number Australian and New Zealand nurses, midwives, carers and health services and their executives who responded to our call for vigil contributions. We thank everyone for taking the time to be a part of this important event.

If you light a candle you can post a photo in your comment during the vigil using #nurseshonoured which will enable ANMF to see all your beautiful images.

On this important day we will be solemnly joining our colleagues from overseas who are also hosting vigils to honour those nurses who have lost their lives as a result of COVID-19.

Restrictions eased: caution and common sense encouraged

Victoria's state of emergency has been extended to 11:59pm, Sunday 31 May.

Following a record 160,000-plus COVID-19 tests, Premier Daniel Andrews introduced a new reason for Victorians to be able to leave their homes. People can now visit family and friends – with a maximum gathering of up to ten outdoors and up to five visitors in your home. The range of outdoor recreational activities people can participate in has also been increased.

In a statement Mr Andrews urged caution and common sense to ensure Victoria can continue to manage the pandemic. Read the Premier's statement via bit.ly/2YXxWUh

Rapid response teams to investigate COVID-19 outbreak

On 11 May Health Minister Jenny Mikakos announced new rapid response teams to prevent, respond to and limit COVID-19 outbreaks as Victoria begins easing restrictions.

The response teams are part of a \$20 million package of measures that will continue beyond the recent testing blitz which has seen more than 160,000 Victorians tested over the past two weeks.

Testing will continue for Victorians even with the mildest symptoms over the next month. The Victorian Government has a target of a further 50,000 tests to be conducted over the next week and 150,000 tests by the end of May. The government will continue to use the data to inform any changes to restrictions.

Health workers, including nurses, midwives and carers, with or without symptoms, are encouraged to voluntarily participate in testing to protect themselves, their families and their patients.

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If you are working in a large public or private health service your employer may have a testing clinic on site. For testing clinic locations call the 24-hour hotline 1800 675 398 or visit bit.ly/3f6u6xF for more information, locations and maps.

The test is bulk-billed. If you do not have symptoms, you do not need to self-isolate while you wait for your test results.

For more information read 'DHHS Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – getting tested when you do not have symptoms (asymptomatic testing) - what you need to know' via bit.ly/2WeVr83

ANMF continues to advocate to resolve members' PPE issues

ANMF continues to work to resolve members' personal protective equipment issues via the weekly Safer Care Victoria PPE committee. Stakeholders include Safer Care Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, WorkSafe Victoria, Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association and a hospital network representative.

A key focus remains on consolidating and clarifying guidance for when and how PPE should be used in relation to COVID-19.

Guidance for maternity and neonatal services was released last week and is expected soon for paediatrics and mental health services.

Further guidance in relation to the use of gowns and infection control is also expected and ANMF will advise members.

The PPE taskforce is developing a guide on 'unconventional' use of PPE in the event there is a COVID-19 patient surge to ensure preparation, guidance and knowledge of how PPE should be considered and used in these circumstances.

'Conventional' use of PPE as per recently released guidance should continue. Single-use PPE should still not be re-used under any circumstances but can be collected by health services, in case it is required to be sterilised for re-use in a surge scenario.

To determine if the PPE is single-use or re-usable refer to the manufacture's documentation.

Members are encouraged to ensure they read the most up-to-date PPE guidance:

1. DHHS *COVID-19 – a guide to the conventional use of PPE* (updated 20 April) via bit.ly/2yBnmaa
2. DHHS - How to put on (don) and take off (doff) your personal protective equipment (PPE) via bit.ly/2zqYT89
3. DHHS Healthcare worker personal protective equipment guidance for performing clinical procedures (updated 23 April) via bit.ly/3d6HglW
4. DHHS *Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Use of n95 respirators in clinical settings* (updated 6 April). via bit.ly/2VPTlqY
5. *COVID-19 PPE for maternity and neonatal services* via bit.ly/2yN9dqN
6. *Federal ANMF evidence brief COVID-19: personal protective equipment* (updated 30 April) via bit.ly/3asr5Ed

Members with concerns about PPE should continue to submit incident reports with their employer and contact ANMF via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance

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Aged care casual nurses and carers entitled to retention bonus

The Federal Minister for Ageing Richard Colbeck has confirmed casual registered and enrolled nurses and personal care workers employed in residential aged care are eligible for the aged care worker retention bonus.

Senator Colbeck included casual nurses' and carers' within eligibility for the payment in a letter (dated 7 May), responding to the Federal ANMF Secretary Annie Butler's request for clarification.

This payment was announced on 20 March to support the aged care sector workforce during the pandemic at a cost of \$234.9 million.

Full-time direct care workers in residential care facilities will receive a payment of up to \$800 after tax per quarter, paid for two quarters.

Workers who provide in-the-home care will receive two payments of up to \$600 after tax per quarter, for two quarters.

Part-time direct care workers receive a pro-rata payment for the amount of time you work. For example, if you work two days a week, you'll receive 40 per cent of the payment.

Payments will be made via your employer with the first payment expected in June (for the preceding quarter). The second payment will be paid in September.

Read Senator Colbeck's letter via bit.ly/3co9ezZ

Direction to limit multiple aged care employers not consistent with advice

The Federal Minister for Ageing Richard Colbeck says aged care employers directing staff that they can not have dual or multiple employers during the pandemic are not acting 'in keeping with the expert advice provided to date'.

Advice issued to aged care employers on 22 April stated that screening, infection control measures and social distancing were key to minimising the risk of transmission.

ANMF has represented a number of members who have been directed by their aged care employer that they cannot retain their employment if they have another aged care employer.

This raises a number of concerns including workforce shortages in aged care and that surge workforce solutions include staff from other residential aged care facilities. The direction has also caused deep distress for nurses and carers who would lose significant weekly income if they were forced to give up ongoing work.

ANMF members who are directed they cannot have dual or multiple aged care employment should immediately contact Member Assistance via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance

Read Senator Colbeck's letter via bit.ly/3co9ezZ

Reorientation to acute care workshops suspended

The ANMF Education Centre has suspended the 'Reorientation to acute care' workshops which were a part of the significant health service, workforce and equipment COVID-19 surge preparations.

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Thanks to the generosity of sponsors First State Super and HESTA, 140 nurses – including aged care nurses, school nurses, theatre nurses and maternal and child health nurses – have undertaken the workshop and are ready and prepared to work in hospitals in the event they are needed.

The ANMF Education Centre is able to quickly restart the 'Reorientation to acute care' workshops in the event there is a COVID-19 patient surge.

Australia, including Victoria, has significantly flattened the COVID-19 curve since restrictions were introduced on Tuesday 24 March.

Thousands of Victorian nurses and midwives have registered an expression of interest to work in the Victorian health system during the pandemic should they be needed. Health services have also started increasing the number of shifts offered to bank staff.

The Federal Government funded education for 20,000 registered nurses to develop knowledge in the delivery of care in intensive care and high dependency units across Australia. It also funded 3000 refresher program scholarships for registered nurses not currently in clinical practice to update their knowledge and re-join the workforce, and funded 500 scholarships for a similar program for enrolled nurses.

The ANMF has worked with others to develop the Registered Undergraduate Students of Midwifery (RUSOM) employment model. While the employment model program hasn't yet been required, the ANMF will continue to advocate for the introduction of the program so that midwifery students can be afforded the same opportunity as their nursing student colleagues. We are pleased that a number of health services have expressed an interest in holding discussions with the ANMF on how to implement the program.

In addition to all of these workforce strategies the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia established a new pandemic sub-register to fast-track the return to practice of experienced and qualified nurses and midwives, who were unregistered in the past three years.

Clinical assessment modules and an extra \$60 CPD online credit for members

The ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre is offering a series of clinical assessment online modules to support nurses wanting to develop their clinical skills in recognising and responding to acute clinical deterioration, including the COVID-19 patient. The 12 one-hour modules on the CPD Portal are:

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 1 - Introduction to acute care / recognising and responding to clinical deterioration

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-1

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 2 - Airway management and unconsciousness

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-2

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 3 - Respiratory failure

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-3

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 4 – Oxygen therapy

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-4

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 5 – Hypotension

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-5

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ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 6 - Sepsis

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-6

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 7 – Non-invasive ventilation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-7

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 8 – Mechanical ventilation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-8

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 9 – Arterial blood gasses

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-9

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 10 – Advanced ventilation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-10

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 11 – Advanced ventilation (prone)

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-11

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 12 – CXR interpretation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-12

All members receive annual credit to use on the ANMF (Vic Branch) CPD Portal. Full and part-time members receive a \$400 annual credit* (or \$120 for members on parental leave and \$80 for student members).

All ANMF members will receive an additional \$60 credit to use on the CPD Portal as a special member benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To access the new online clinical assessment modules, visit cpd.anmfvic.asn.au

Let your colleagues know that ANMF has halved the module price to make it easier for any non-members to complete these important modules. Non-members should click 'non-member login' to log in or create an account.

*ANMF (Vic Branch) members' annual credit is renewed every July.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre virtual classroom courses

Information about some ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre courses moving to a virtual classroom was included in the last newsflash. In case you missed it – you can find these courses and registration links via anmfvic.asn.au/virtualclassroom

COVID-19 hardship assistance for ANMF (Vic Branch) members

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a huge economic impact globally and some ANMF members may be experiencing financial hardship. The ANMF (Vic Branch) encourages members who are not able to access payment from their employer and are experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 to contact us via this form: anmfvic.asn.au/COVID19hardship. All inquiries will be treated with the strictest confidence.

This fund is in addition to the usual assistance members can apply for through the Florence Nightingale Fund.

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ANMF encourages members to download COVIDsafe app

On Sunday 26 April the Federal Government released the COVIDsafe app to assist in speeding up the process of manual COVID-19 contact tracing.

Members are encouraged to download the voluntary app. Read an ABC explainer via bit.ly/ABC-covidapp

For more information and Google Play and App Store links visit bit.ly/COVIDSafeapp

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