



**Australian
Nursing &
Midwifery
Federation**

VICTORIAN BRANCH

Newsflash

Thursday 2 April 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) Update #4

COVID-19 surge workforce strategies, a social media reminder and a guide to help you stay safe

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 being 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 from home. Members with complex inquiries will still have phone contact with staff.

The following is based on state and federal health department information. 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).

Personal protective equipment

ANMF has been invited to participate on a weekly Safer Care Victoria personal protective equipment committee. Stakeholders include Safer Care Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), WorkSafe Victoria, Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association (VHIA) and a hospital network representative.

ANMF OHS Unit Co-ordinator Kathy Chrisfield is representing the Branch and members on the committee, which is working through and trying to resolve the issues our members and others are raising around the state.

Members should be aware of the latest DHHS PPE guidance, including when to use and when not to use PPE. The document, updated on 30 March, is available at bit.ly/2Uzw9lp

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

Education to upskill during the pandemic

ANMF has had a number of member inquiries regarding the Australian Government's 2 April announcement about funding 20,000 online education places for registered nurses to upskill for intensive care and high dependency units.

The Australian College of Critical Care Nurses has endorsed the additional training.

To combat COVID-19, and protect the health and wellbeing of all Australians, we need to use all resources available, especially the skills and knowledge of our highly capable nursing workforce. ANMF welcomes this strategy, which aims to maximise the capacity of experienced registered nurses and prepare them to boost the intensive care nursing workforce, as needed, in dealing with the unfolding pandemic.

The course will entail 40 hours study with three components: acute respiratory, critical care and high dependency nursing.

Registered nurses interested in undertaking the education should visit medcast.com.au/surge-critical-care or contact Medcast by phone on 1300 652 046.

The Australian Government has also funded online refresher courses to enable registered and enrolled nurses **who are not currently in clinical practice** to update their knowledge to re-join the health workforce. For the registered nurse refresher program visit bit.ly/2UBv8cT and for the enrolled nurse refresher program visit bit.ly/2wYFhHt

AHPRA to establish pandemic sub-register to boost health workforce

AHPRA and the National Boards will establish a new pandemic sub-register to fast-track a return to the workforce of experienced and qualified health practitioners who are currently unregistered.

The sub-register will be established for the next 12 months to manage increasing demand on the health system due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sub-register will enable nurses and midwives, as well as other health professionals, who previously held registration and left the register of practitioners or moved to non-practising registration in the past three years, to return to practice.

AHPRA will be contacting more than 40,000 health practitioners who meet these criteria to alert them that they will be added to the new sub-register.

The temporary sub-register will operate on an opt-out basis with practitioners added to the pandemic sub-register automatically. They will not need to fill in forms or pay fees, nor meet the usual return to practice requirements.

There is no obligation for anyone added to the sub-register to practise or remain on it. They can opt out at any time, for any reason.

The sub-register is expected to be in place from 6 April. Read more at bit.ly/3dHfDHP

To support boosting the nursing workforce, the ANMF (Vic Branch) commenced 'Reorientation to acute care' workshops on Monday 30 March for nurses wanting to refresh their acute care skills and return to the workforce. These courses are funded by ANMF (Vic Branch), First State Super and HESTA and are provided at no cost to participants. Register your interest in a 'Reorientation to acute care' workshop via anmfvic.asn.au/reorientation

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Private acute sector and elective surgery wind back

ANMF has welcomed the positive developments in relation to federal and state government announcements that the public and private health services will operate as 'one system' for the duration of the pandemic. Victoria has reached an agreement with our private acute hospital providers.

ANMF continues to represent affected members and we will provide more information about the impact of the announcements on members once the detail of the federal and state government agreements is released.

Victorian Government investment boost

The Victorian Government announced on 1 April it would invest \$1.3 billion into the health system to establish an extra 4000 intensive care unit beds to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The government is ordering \$1.2 billion worth of equipment, as well as investing over \$65 million for capital works and workforce training. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased will include 551 million gloves, 100 million masks and 14.5 million gowns.

This is additional to the \$537 million the government has invested in more beds, ICU equipment and personal protective equipment to respond to the coronavirus crisis.

New Victorian workforce register to support the health system

The Department of Health and Human Services has launched a new register for healthcare professionals, including retired nurses and midwives, who want to support the Victorian health system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you to the more than 1000 nurses, midwives and retired nurses and midwives who responded, in less than a week, to ANMF's earlier call for expressions of interest. The response was overwhelming and we have passed on these expressions of interest to the department, if you gave us permission to do so.

Health Minister Jenny Mikakos launched the new register on Sunday 29 March saying: 'Our healthcare workers are heroes on the frontline of this crisis and we need all hands on deck as we face this unprecedented challenge.'

Nurses, midwives, medical professionals, allied health professionals, paramedics, patient services assistants/assistants in nursing are all invited to register.

All trained health practitioners are being asked to express interest, even if their registration has lapsed. Successful applicants may be required to work within a modified scope of practice or within different settings to their usual practice.

AHPRA and NMBA reminder to nurses and midwives

The Australian Health Practitioner Registration Agency (AHPRA) and the National Boards have issued a reminder to all health professionals, including nurses and midwives, to ensure COVID-19 information and advice provided to the public is scientifically accurate and from authoritative sources.

The reminder recommends sources such as state, territory or Commonwealth health departments or the World Health Organization (WHO).

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While the vast majority of health practitioners were responding professionally to the COVID-19 emergency and focusing on providing safe care, the AHPRA and the National Boards are seeing some examples of false and misleading advertising about COVID-19. Read more via bit.ly/2xKclCR

Social media – rules still apply - reminder

Don't post about your employer on social media.

We are going to keep reminding members that despite the pandemic, it is business as usual when it comes to social media. That means your employer's social media policy and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia guidelines still apply.

ANMF has prepared seven tips to manage your social media during the pandemic:

1. Do not post about your work, especially anything related to COVID-19. This applies equally to public pages and closed, private or secret groups. Under no circumstances are you to name or refer to the health status of a colleague or individual.
2. Read **ANMF (Vic Branch)**'s (bit.ly/2X2IoZG), **NMBA**'s (bit.ly/30droOJ) and your employer's social media policies to ensure your posts operate within those policies.
3. Check your privacy status and where possible, don't disclose your full name.
4. Review your past posts to ensure they don't discuss your workplace.
5. Be careful who you 'friend', particularly colleagues. You must also maintain professional boundaries with patients/clients and their friends/family.
6. Recognise that your posts can be easily shared and screenshot. Avoid posting content that you'd be uncomfortable with the entire world seeing or could highlight unprofessional behaviour. Once again – do not name or refer to the health status of colleagues or individuals.
7. Be careful that your posts don't contravene professional standards. Anyone can search for what you've posted or liked on public Facebook profiles, pages and groups, so be aware that your comments are public.

These tips aren't new, and it remains important to understand that nurses and midwives are held to high standards of conduct and you must comply with the NMBA and your employer's policies.

Don't bring it home: guide to minimise the risk of infection

In response to members' queries ANMF (Vic Branch) has developed a guide to assist you in relation to returning home from work after a shift.

Job Reps and HSRs are encouraged to print the poster which is part of this newsflash for your workplace. You can also download the 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' A4 poster via bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH

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Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection.

-  **1** On entry, remove your shoes and place in a plastic box.
-  **2** Leave your bag, wallet, mobile, keys, etc in a box near the entry.
-  **3** Change out of your clothes immediately and wash them. Use the hottest possible machine wash setting and dryer if you can.
-  **4** Have a shower.
-  **5** Clean items you've brought in and surfaces you've touched.

Remember to wash your hands regularly.

Cleaning tips



Consider changing in and out of your uniform/scrubs at work.



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COVID-19
IMPORTANT
INFORMATION

for nurses, midwives and carers about coronavirus
anmfvic.asn.au/covid-19



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