

Friday 10 September 2021

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update 54

ANMF strongly advocating for members as surge plans implemented

Victorian COVID-19 cases on 10 September: there are 2426 active cases, including 334 new locally acquired cases. One person has died. There are 127 patients in hospital, including 33 in ICU. Data links are at the end of this newsflash.

Restrictions eased in regional Victoria (except for Greater Shepparton)

Restrictions eased in regional Victoria as of 11.59pm, Thursday 9 September 2021.

The five reasons to leave home no longer apply except for Greater Shepparton which is still managing an outbreak. There is no longer a limit on the distance regional Victorians can travel from their home – other than restrictions on entering metropolitan Melbourne. The authorised worker list no longer applies, and most businesses and venues can reopen with capacity and density limits. Prep, grade 2 and year 12 students are returning to onsite learning.

Premier's 8 September 2021 statement <https://bit.ly/3yR8cak>

Regional restrictions <https://bit.ly/3jYecJW>

Metropolitan restrictions <https://bit.ly/3gNFIOG>

ANMF strongly advocating for nurses, midwives and carers as surge plans implemented

ANMF continues to ensure the voice of our 95,000 members – nurses, midwives and carers – is heard as decisions are made about 'opening up' when 70 and 80 per cent of eligible people are fully vaccinated.

ANMF is confident significant work is well progressed on surge workforce plans, prepared in 2020, to respond to an increase in hospitalisations. These plans must acknowledge that we are almost 20 months into the pandemic and the workforce, particularly those who have borne the brunt of COVID-19 hospitalisations – are deeply, deeply fatigued and the ability to take annual leave to recharge has been severely limited.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

ANMF is seeking information about the utilisation of the pandemic surge workforce. This includes:

- the Victorian Government's surge workforce register,
- the Federal Government's critical care education for 20,000 nurses last year (the largest number of these were Victorian), and
- the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's pandemic sub-register of appropriately and skilled recently retired nurses who've registered to assist.

Work should be happening to prepare orientation for these nurses to start work.

Meaningful annual leave should be factored into surge workforce plans so that nurses and midwives can recharge properly. ANMF also supports the emergency vaccination workforce, including nursing and midwifery students, which will enable the return of nurses and midwives back to their hospitals to the relief of their stretched colleagues.

National cabinet is examining ICU capacity across the country and has requested further work from the Burnet Institute. Members will already be aware we've written to the Victorian Premier, and ANMF nationally has written to the Prime Minister, asking for modelling to understand the impact on the health system of any easing of restrictions.

ANMF is working to ensure Victoria's precious nursing, midwifery and personal care workforce is not taken for granted and that the health eco system is protected – from hospital in the home, aged care, mental health, midwifery, emergency departments, COVID-19 wards to ICU.

Much has changed and continues to change. But we do know more about this virus. Vaccination rates are rapidly increasing amongst healthcare workers and the community. PPE and infection control, ventilation, fit testing have all been improved with a consistent approach across the state. Furloughing guidelines have been modified to mitigate risk, but also to reduce the large numbers of nurses required to quarantine.

It is important our health system and our members are supported going into this next phase and we are as prepared as possible.

Emergency surge vaccination workforce will free up nurses and midwives

The Victorian Government is expanding the vaccination workforce to include dental and oral health, allied health, pharmacy, and pathology workforces and select students of these workforce groups. Nursing and midwifery students will also be able to vaccinate under public health emergency orders.

The workforce expansion will help Victoria meet its vaccination targets while freeing up nurses and midwives to return to their health services and ease the pressure on their colleagues working overtime and double shifts.

Undergraduate nursing and midwifery students wanting to work in vaccination hubs can find out more about how to register your interest, training and supervision requirements and position descriptions via <https://bit.ly/3E4x0ze>

PPE supply and surge guidance

As at 9 September 2021, the Department of Health advises as there were: 12 million N95 respirator masks, 42 million surgical masks, six million visors, six million safety glasses, 10 million isolation gowns and 218 million gloves. The report is available on the department's PPE information page via <https://bit.ly/3g5d96m>

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The department has also issued health services with new guidance outlining scenarios that may require a surge PPE supply. This may occur if there is a hospital outbreak causing significant staff furlough, significant cases in the local community causing unprecedented demand on the health service, ward/ED closures or diversion due to bed closures associated with staff furlough.

During a PPE surge, all staff in patient-facing roles are to be in tier 3 PPE and the duration will be case by case, but likely to be two weeks as staff are released from quarantine.

Cross border movement of health care workers – first dose vaccination required

The Victorian Government has tightened NSW border restrictions by adding a vaccination requirement to its Specified Worker (Multiple Entry) Permit.

From 23 September, freight and healthcare workers entering Victoria under the Specified Worker (Multiple Entry) Permit must have had at least one vaccination dose before entry.

Evidence can be documentation from the vaccine provider of your first dose or your COVID-19 digital certificate which is accessible through your Commonwealth myGov account.

Workers will need to apply for a new permit if their current permit expires after 23 September and confirm that they have received their vaccine dose to be eligible for this permit.

ANMF is seeking further clarification for our members who live in NSW but work in Victoria.

Testing sites update

The Victorian Department of Health has reminded testing sites in metropolitan Melbourne and Greater Shepparton not to turn away anyone presenting for a COVID-19 test. This is due to an increase in people requiring asymptomatic testing including VCE/VET students, high risk industries (food and meat), construction and ride share delivery drivers.

Maternal and child health guidance updated

As of 11.59pm Thursday 9 September the following changes apply:

Regional maternal and child health services (except for Greater Shepparton) no longer require authorised worker permits. These services continue to follow COVID PEAK (black) risk rating guidance (<https://bit.ly/2VsQD2B>) which now advises standard length face-to-face appointments for all infants and children. Face-to-face support groups with limits can resume.

Metropolitan and Greater Shepparton maternal and child health services are following COVID PEAK (black) risk rating guidance (<https://bit.ly/3zf3aVZ>) which now advises standard length face-to-face services for infants 0-8 weeks at each key age and stage visit, and for Aboriginal infants and children and those with additional needs.

For all key age and stage visits from four months, provide tele- or web-based consultations in combination with short face-to-face to attend physical and developmental assessments.

Youngest infants should be prioritised if workforce capacity is compromised due to furloughing, increased workload, or workforce shortage.

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Care for COVID-19 positive pregnant women guidance

The Department of Health has released metropolitan and regional guidance for caring for COVID positive pregnant women in the community. Women, including those in regional Victoria, requiring hospital admission will be transferred to the specialist high acuity obstetric service at Monash Medical Centre Clayton, if safe to do so. Otherwise, they should be transferred to the closest hospital.

Student clinical placement guidance updated for COVID PEAK (black) risk rating

Student clinical placement can continue under the COVID PEAK (black) risk rating.

The Department of Health's updated guidance states placements can continue in non-COVID streaming hospitals with the requirement that students should not provide care/be exposed to high-risk SCOVID/confirmed COVID patients.

Placements can also continue in COVID streaming hospitals, with the requirement that students should not provide care/be exposed to high-risk SCOVID/COVID patients, or be placed in designated COVID streaming areas. These hospitals can designate specified areas of the ED and/or ICU where student placements may proceed. Placement in ED/ICU should only be considered for students who are fully vaccinated, and prior to placement have been fit-tested for N95/P2 respirator mask and received correct donning and doffing training.

Students placed on a ward where a patient tests positive for COVID-19, should be deployed to an alternative ward until there are no longer any active cases and appropriate cleaning and disinfection is completed. They will also need to follow any potential exposure advice, for example surveillance testing, given to them by the department.

The department is strongly recommending students on placement are fully vaccinated prior to placement. Students on placements in residential aged care must follow the Chief Health Officer's directive for all residential aged care workers and have at least their first dose by 17 September 2021. Alternatively, they must have evidence of a booking to receive their first dose by 1 October 2021.

Read the guidance via <https://bit.ly/3neaSN2>

The Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria NMHPV

The NMHPV is staffed by mental health nurses, as well as nurses and midwives with counselling training. One chat may help to reset and decide on some healthy strategies or there may be a need for ongoing support.

Not ready to call NMHPV? All nurses, midwives, personal care workers and nursing and midwifery students are encouraged to reflect on their current circumstances and wellbeing and fill out the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria's self-care plan questionnaire via <https://bit.ly/343qHLf>. You will be emailed a self-care plan.

To contact NMHPV call 9415 7551 or email admin@nmhp.org.au Find out more <https://www.nmhp.org.au>

Victorian Department of Health employment advice

The Victorian Department of Health's 'Coronavirus Guidance Note on Employment-Related Matters' – provides advice on leave, including special paid leave and vaccination leave and re-deployment. ANMF encourages all employers to follow this guidance, however, recognise that enforcement is limited to public sector employers only.

The guidance, last updated 22 August 2021, can be read via <https://bit.ly/2UhDSU2>

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Join ANMF's 'I'm vaccinated because' campaign

ANMF members are encouraged to participate in our campaign to tell the community that vaccination is effective and reduces your chances of hospitalisation, severe illness, and death.

All Victorian nurses, midwives and carers are invited to participate in our campaign by submitting a photograph or video of yourself explaining why you were vaccinated. There will be weekly Apple AirPods prizes.

Find out more via www.anmfvic.asn.au/imvaccinated

We'll use your photos and videos to share on the ANMF (Vic Branch) social media channels, and our publications.

I'm vaccinated Facebook profile frame

Another easy way to spread the word is to use our 'I'm vaccinated' Facebook profile frame. If you're fully vaccinated use our new nurses', midwives' and carers' Facebook frame and tell the rest of Victoria.

<https://bit.ly/3D00IF1>

Priority Pfizer vaccination appointments for nurses, midwives and carers

ANMF continues to strongly encourage all nurses, midwives and aged care personal care workers to get vaccinated.

The Chief Health Officer Directives require those working in public and private aged care to have at least a first dose of the vaccine prior to 17 September 2021.

For information on centres visit www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccination-centres

Public sector nurses and midwives have access to half a day's paid leave to have your vaccination and up to four days special leave if you have symptoms after receiving your vaccine that prevent you from attending work. The public sector enterprise agreement personal leave evidence requirements apply.

Regardless of age nurses, midwives and carers are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine at a Victorian Government vaccine hub. Use the phone number or online appointment link below to access the Pfizer priority appointments.

Make an online booking via the Victorian Government's website <https://portal.cvms.vic.gov.au/> or **call the Victorian Government Coronavirus Hotline** on **1800 675 398** and tell the hotline operator you are a health care worker or aged care worker.

How to access ANMF support

Members are encouraged complete an online Member Assistance inquiry form via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance (scroll to the bottom of the page).

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Personal protective equipment concern?

Members with concerns about PPE should:

1. **raise and submit OHS incident reports with your employer** as well as speaking directly with your manager
2. **involve your Health and Safety Rep** if you have one
3. contact ANMF via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance> (include your report and response if applicable) for further support and advice if after you have raised your concerns they are not addressed by your employer.

Exposure sites

Check this page regularly <https://bit.ly/35YOUnv>

Do you live with a close contact?

If you have a close contact living in your household, you are a secondary contact and must quarantine until they are told they can leave quarantine. More information via <https://bit.ly/2TqAQ3t>

Where can I get tested for COVID-19?

Please get tested even with the slightest of symptoms. Testing site information <https://bit.ly/2TB9eZ9>

\$450 test and isolation payment

The Victorian Government provides a \$450 test and isolation payment to workers required to isolate after taking a COVID-19 test who don't have access to paid leave. More information, eligibility, and applications <https://bit.ly/3fWygqQ>

\$1500 disaster leave payment

The Federal Government provides a \$1500 disaster leave payment if you tested positive or were identified as a close contact and must isolate for 14 days. Private aged care workers are eligible for the payment if you do not have access to paid leave during your isolation period. Call 180 22 66 to make a claim. More information, eligibility, and applications <https://bit.ly/3bWnfXG>

Emergency accommodation for healthcare workers

The Victorian Government provides the 'frontline accommodation program' for health care workers if they need support to quarantine or isolate safely. Private aged care nurses and personal care workers are eligible to access this program. For details <https://bit.ly/2X6cABJ>

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COVID-19 important links for nurses, midwives and personal care workers

ANMF continues to collate the important links all in one place, so you don't have to go looking. Please bookmark and check this page regularly – <https://anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19>

Latest COVID-19 statistics

Victorian COVID-19 data dashboard <https://bit.ly/3j5vJwC>

Healthcare Worker COVID-19 data dashboard <https://bit.ly/3jQT5q4>

Victorian Chief Health Officer daily update <https://bit.ly/34Et8Ug>

Victorian Chief Health Officer daily media release <https://bit.ly/2EDiQLb>

Victorian Government's vaccination data dashboard <https://bit.ly/319HzPq>

Federal Government national COVID-19 data <https://bit.ly/3spz67E>

Federal Government's national and aged care vaccination data <https://bit.ly/3spRSM5>

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

The ANMF (Vic Branch) 'Don't bring it home' guide is designed to assist members returning home from work after a shift. Job Reps and HSRs are encouraged to download and print the 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' A4 poster [PDF] via bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH

ANMF Job Reps and Health and Safety Reps are encouraged to display this newsflash on their workplace noticeboard.



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

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- Hot soapy wash, wipe or disinfectant spray (depending on surface) phone cases, keys, ID, lanyard, glasses, etc.**

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