

Friday 17 September 2021

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

Update 56

### **Transport and road closure advice and health unions call on Andrews Government to ensure the health system is not overwhelmed**

Victorian COVID-19 cases on 17 September: there are 4697 active cases, including 510 new locally acquired cases. One person has died. There are 208 patients in hospital, including 49 in ICU, with 32 on ventilators. Data links are at the end of this newsflash.

#### **Public transport suspended and road closures on Saturday 18 September**

Due to a protest on Saturday 18 September, [public transport will not run into the CBD from 8am until 2pm](#) at the request of Victoria Police.

- **Metropolitan trains** will terminate at suburban stations
- **Tram and buses** will terminate some distance from the CBD boundary. Some routes are cancelled and while others will run to a reduced timetable.

Check the PTV website [bit.ly/3zfa4d3](https://bit.ly/3zfa4d3) for details.

Significant delays are expected on roads leading to the CBD due to [road closures](#) (see [traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au](https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au)). Essential workers will be granted access at roadblocks. Please ensure you have proof (e.g., work permit).

#### **CBD parking on Saturday**

Hospitals have been asked to provide staff with taxi vouchers or on-site parking in advance.

The Victorian Department of Health has organised with the University of Melbourne free parking for healthcare workers at University Square carpark:

- Enter via 244 Bouverie Street or 206 Berkeley Street, the boom gates will be up at these carpark entrances.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

- Control Room staff will be briefed about the arrangement and will redirect any staff inadvertently attempting to access other carparks at the University Square site.
- The carpark has capacity for approximately 1100 vehicles and is patrolled by University Security personnel. If this reaches capacity, they will direct healthcare workers to an overflow carpark.

A similar arrangement is in place with Melbourne Museum. Healthcare workers can access the Melbourne Museum carpark once they press the buzzer and advise the attendant the name of their health service.

## **Health unions call on Andrews Government to approach ‘roadmap’ decisions with extreme caution**

Victorian nurses, midwives, paramedics, doctors, and allied health professionals are calling on the Andrews Government to apply extreme caution and put lives and the capacity of the workforce and health system first as it makes decisions about easing restrictions and opening up.

A joint release issued by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch), the Victorian Ambulance Union, the Australian Medical Association Victoria, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers’ Federation, and the Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association called on Premier Dan Andrews to ensure that government’s ‘roadmap’ decisions are based on:

1. what is best for the health of Victorians
2. accurate modelling
3. what our dedicated health professionals can safely manage.

Victoria’s health professionals are burning out and are rightly fearful that as numbers increase as restrictions ease our hospitals will be full of COVID patients and non-COVID patients will find it difficult to access a bed. We need Premier Andrews to hold the line and ensure our health system is not overwhelmed as COVID cases rise.

Read the full ‘Victorian patients more important than getting on the beers’ joint media release at the end of this newsflash or via <https://bit.ly/3EotWOF>

## **Reserved 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.

Regardless of age nurses, midwives and carers, and their household contacts, are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine at a Victorian Government vaccine hub. Use the phone number below to access the reserved Pfizer appointments.

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.

Casual private aged care nurses and personal care workers can access, through your employer, an \$80 payment per vaccination dose. Casual staff who become unwell after vaccination and do not have other leave entitlements can access one day’s paid leave (at a rate of \$185).

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**To access a reserved appointment, 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 or a household contact.

More information about eligibility for reserved vaccination appointments is available on the Victorian Government's website <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/who-can-get-vaccinated>

## **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>

## **How to access ANMF support**

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

## **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/35YOUUnv>

## **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>

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## **\$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>

## **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/3spz67F>

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](https://bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH)

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

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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

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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.**

# JOINT media release



Australian  
Nursing &  
Midwifery  
Federation  
VICTORIAN BRANCH



VICTORIAN  
ALLIED HEALTH  
PROFESSIONALS  
ASSOCIATION



## Victorian patients more important than getting on the beers

FRIDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2021

Victorian nurses, midwives, paramedics, doctors, and allied health professionals are calling on the Andrews Government to apply extreme caution and put lives and the capacity of the workforce and health system first as it makes decisions about easing restrictions and opening up.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch), the Victorian Ambulance Union, the Australian Medical Association Victoria, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation, and the Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association, representing almost 120,000 health care workers, are calling on Premier Daniel Andrews to ensure that the Government's decisions are based on:

1. what is best for the health of Victorians
2. accurate modelling
3. what our dedicated health professionals can safely manage.

Premier Andrews must continue to not succumb to the pressures of those advocating to ease restrictions – whatever the cost.

The Commonwealth Government and National Cabinet re-opening plans are based on the widely debated Doherty model of 80 per cent vaccination of the eligible population aged over 16 years. This is 60 per cent of the total population. The model does not consider the impact on the 40 per cent of unvaccinated Australians (the 20 percent 16 years and above and those under 16 years of age) or examine vulnerable groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As Victoria's COVID positive numbers climb we are seeing hundreds of Victorians admitted to Hospital in the Home (HITH) COVID services, increasing hospital and intensive care admissions and longer stays to recover. We need accurate modelling for expected ambulance demand, hospitalisations, intensive care patients and deaths due to the Delta variant into the future.

Modelling must also detail the impact on access to health services for non-COVID-related patients such as heart attacks, stroke and surgery.

Nurses, doctors and other health professionals are currently caring for and treating more than 300 COVID patients in the HITH program and almost 200 hospital patients, including 51 in intensive care. Less than three weeks ago we had 27 patients in hospital and 12 in intensive care.

We are creating new mental health programs to ease pressure on emergency departments and mental health services. We are transferring COVID positive pregnant women, from across the state, to two metropolitan services.

Victoria's health professionals are burning out and are rightly fearful that as numbers increase as restrictions ease our hospitals will be full of COVID patients and non-COVID patients will find it difficult to access a bed. We need Premier Andrews to hold the line and ensure our health system is not overwhelmed as COVID cases rise.

**Quotes attributable to Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick**

*'Victoria is doing everything it can to prepare, we have a surge workforce working across 60 vaccination hubs and almost 250 testing sites, nurses have completed critical care education, we have extra beds and ventilators.*

*What we haven't been able to do is give our exhausted nursing and midwifery workforce a break to properly re-charge. They now approach the next peak deeply, deeply fatigued.*

*Business interests and people's desire to get back to normal is understandable. But surely a beer in the pub or a coffee in a café cannot happen at the cost of exhausted healthcare workers wearing uncomfortable tier 3 PPE shift, after shift in a health system making impossible decisions about who gets a bed and spiralling deaths each week.'*

**Quotes attributable to Victorian Ambulance Union General Secretary Danny Hill**

*'We all want to get on the beers, believe me. But more than anything we want our health workers and their patients to be safe. Today we have 29 COVID patients on ventilators and it takes an army of health workers to keep them alive. We all of our health workers safe and able to work so they can continue to save lives.'*

**Quotes attributable to Australian Medical Association Victoria President and Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation Federal Assistant Secretary Dr Roderick McRae**

*'COVID-19 is putting unprecedented strain on Victoria's health care system and now is not the time to open up.*

*Stress is being felt across the system including in primary care, HITH outreach care for COVID-19 patients, and caring for admitted patients both with COVID-19 and other medical illnesses.*

*AMA Victoria considers it reckless to open up the current Victorian restrictions until 80 percent of people 12 years and older, who are now eligible for vaccination, are two weeks beyond their second dose. That is the time to reassess the state's capacity to manage the inevitable cases of COVID-19 in the remaining 1.6 million unvaccinated Victorian citizens.*

*The healthcare system is currently stressed related to general practice exposure and COVID-19 hospital spread in hospitals, resulting in loss of important medical, nursing and allied healthcare staff. These staff also can be exposed to COVID-19 in their domestic and community situations, including other family or household members or child education facilities*

*AMA Victoria understands the implications of its policy but there are no simple solutions related to the management of COVID-19. This is simply the least bad option.'*

**Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association Assistant Secretary Andrew Hewat**

*'This has been a long, tough and incredibly stressful 18 months for healthcare workers. The impact on their mental and physical wellbeing has been huge. We need the Premier to hold the line and maintain strong public health measures to help keep the pressure on the hospitals and the healthcare workers as low as possible.*

*'We must stop counting bed capacity and start looking at healthcare worker capacity, both mental and physical. Healthcare workers are at breaking point. You have no health system without health professionals to run it.*

*'We have never seen allied health professionals as stressed and burnt out as we are currently seeing. Many were suffering workload stress before COVID hit. The pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities in our health system, and we need to do everything possible to protect healthcare workers, so they can continue to protect and care for Victorians.'*

**ends**