

Saturday 4 September 2021

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update 53

**Watch out for your colleagues; aged care required vaccination webinar;
ANMF calls for more modelling and analysis before re-opening;
furloughing guidance**

Victorian COVID-19 cases on 4 September: there are 1301 active cases, including 190 new locally acquired cases. Data links are at the end of this newsflash.

Encourage struggling colleagues to call NMHPV

Nurses and midwives are resilient and dedicated. But they also have a reputation for battling on when they are in need of support themselves.

If you know a colleague who is not coping please make sure they know they can access the free, confidential Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria. Encourage them to call. Alternatively, you may like to access the service yourself. One chat may help to reset and decide on some healthy strategies or there may be a need for ongoing support.

The NMHPV is staffed predominantly by mental health nurses, as well as nurses and midwives with counselling training. They understand your work.

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>

Required COVID-19 vaccination aged care webinar

Friday 10 September 2021, 2pm - 3pm (note new date, previously advertised as 6 September)

This Victorian-specific webinar is designed to support the residential aged care workforce on priority COVID-19 vaccination and provide information on the state's public health order requiring vaccination which is expected to be released very soon.

The webinar will be hosted by Commonwealth Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor Michael Kidd. Panellists will include Federal and Victorian Government, health department representatives and unions, including ANMF.

Panellists will cover topics such as:

- why it is so important to get vaccinated against COVID-19
- how workers can access priority Pfizer vaccinations ahead of the 17 September deadline
- how workers will be supported to be vaccinated by their workplace and government
- some of reasons workers might feel hesitant about getting vaccinated and how they can feel more assured
- how required COVID-19 vaccination will apply in Victoria.

Participants can submit questions to VacTaskForceAgedCare_Comms@Health.gov.au any time before the webinar. Please note "VIC Webinar" in your email subject heading.

Participants can also submit written questions during the live webinar. This can be anonymous if preferred.

The registration link will be available next week.

ANMF calls for Delta modelling impact before 'opening up'

Federal ANMF Secretary Annie Butler has written to Prime Minister Scott Morrison outlining the union's concerns about prematurely 're-opening' before understanding the impact on the health system and the nursing and midwifery workforce.

Ms Butler has called for more detailed modelling and analysis before 're-opening' Australia.

Federal ANMF supports transitioning the country's COVID-19 response from strict virus suppression to more relaxed restrictions. However, Ms Butler told Prime Minister Morrison Australia should not transition until vaccination rates and public health measures were in place to enable the health and aged care systems and their workforces to be able to continue to deliver best practice care.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

Ms Butler asked National Cabinet to consider:

1. current health system demand capacity, including expansion capacity, both critical care and general, and management of non-COVID health demand
2. assessment of safe vaccination targets, which include the entire population, not just those currently eligible
3. vaccination rates needed for vulnerable populations, including those aged over 70 and other high-risk groups
4. management of anticipated vaccination roll out channels for boosters once recommended
5. the impact of the Delta and future variants, including on children, particularly in the context of uncontrolled community transmission as is currently occurring in NSW
6. how the test, trace, isolate, quarantine (TTIQ) workforce will be fully resourced and maintained without impacting the nursing and midwifery workforces
7. how to ensure that all communities across Australia will have equal access to safe health care as we progress through the pandemic.

Read Federal ANMF Secretary Annie Butler's 31 August 2021 letter via <https://bit.ly/38D3B0M>

ANMF (Vic Branch) has also written to Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews outlining the same concerns. Read more <https://bit.ly/3BCOjFQ>

COVID-19 fact or fiction: AHPRA tells Australians to rely on trusted health professionals

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency is urging the community to rely on registered health practitioners for trusted information about COVID-19 and vaccines to protect themselves and their family.

AHPRA released a joint statement on 30 August 2021 advising the public that registered health practitioners, including registered and enrolled nurses and midwives, can help them identify COVID-19 and vaccine 'fact from fiction'.

The statement by AHPRA, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, the Health Care Complaints Commission and the Therapeutic Goods Administration emphasises registered health practitioners' 'professional obligation to only share information that is evidence-based, in-line with the best available health advice, and is consistent with public health campaigns such as the Australian COVID-19 Vaccination Policy [<https://bit.ly/2WUUDcO>].'

The joint statement also points out that registered health practitioners must meet their profession's code of conduct (via <https://bit.ly/3zGwuFi>) and action can be taken against a nurse or midwife who does not meet those standards.

Read the joint statement <https://bit.ly/3toSK4h>

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

The UK Government estimates that its vaccination program has 'directly averted' more than 82,100 hospitalisations. Its **COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report: 26 August 2021** says analysis of the UK vaccination program's 'direct and indirect' impact suggests it has prevented between 23.8 and 24.4 million infections and between 102,500 and 109,500 deaths. Read the report via <https://bit.ly/3zGbb6M>

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

ANMF members - trusted nurses, midwives and carers - 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.

We want to use your photos and videos to share on the ANMF (Vic Branch) social media channels, and our publications, such as *The Handover* and *On the Record*.

How to participate

You can either:

1. **Send us your vaccination selfie** (e.g. a selfie with your vaccination card, or your MyGov vaccination screen on your phone, if you can) and tell us why you got your COVID-19 vaccination.
2. **Send us a short video** of no more than one minute of you talking about how you're a nurse, midwife, or carer and explain why you got vaccinated and how important it is to do so. For example: 'I'm Sam and I've been a midwife for 5 years. I'm vaccinated because I want to be able to see my loved ones regularly'. *If you speak other languages, let us know via the online submission form and we'll be in touch.*

Video tips

- Make sure you are in a well-lit room.
- Hold your phone horizontally/landscape (**this is important**) and if filming handheld, try and keep your phone as steady as possible.
- Frame yourself so you're looking directly at the camera straight ahead (not looking down at your phone).
- We need about one minute.
- Script: I'm [first name] and I've been a [nurse/midwife/carers] for [number] years. I'm vaccinated because [insert reason].
- Name your video file with your name, so we know who you are.

How to submit your photo or video

- **If you're submitting a photo** – fill in **our online form** via <https://bit.ly/3DJodmf> where you can also upload your photo (please send it at original size if you're sending it from an iPhone)
- **If you're submitting a video** – fill in **our online form** via <https://bit.ly/3DJodmf> You will then receive an email with a Dropbox link to upload your video from your device. Please rename your file to your full name, so we know who you are!

After you've submitted your entry, why not start the conversation on your social media and share your photo or video (if you haven't already done so) and tag us @anmfvic so we can see it (it will need to be public). You can also find tips on countering vaccine hesitancy **on our website** via <https://bit.ly/3ekLike>

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

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>

Furloughing guidance is changing

The Victorian Department of Health has released updated furloughing guidance which recognises different levels of risk and the impact of furloughing staff on those who are furloughed and those who are left behind.

The recommendations are more nuanced than earlier versions and consider different situations, levels of PPE protection and vaccination status. Which staff are furloughed will be based on a risk assessment and determined by outbreak management teams.

The updated document provides guidance for those considered a 'moderate risk' to return to the workplace if they return negative tests on day 2 and 5, with conditions including working only on a single site, additional surveillance testing, daily saliva test at work and wearing a mask at all times. These staff are still required to isolate as a primary close contact until clearance following the day 13 test. ANMF is seeking clarification on where these staff are able to take their breaks.

ANMF is monitoring the implementation closely to ensure the guidance continues to be applied conservatively. If there is any doubt, then a staff member will be furloughed for the extended 14-day period.

Public sector members are reminded that if they are required to furlough in accordance with the Victorian Chief Health Officer's requirements, they will be able to access paid special leave from their employer during the isolation or mandatory quarantine period. ANMF encourages all employers to follow this guidance, however, recognise that enforcement is limited to public sector employers only.

If you or a colleague is furloughed please remember support is available via the free, confidential Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria for support on 9415 7551 or email admin@nmhp.org.au. Find out more

<https://www.nmhp.org.au>

COVID PEAK (black) highest risk guidance

A reminder all health services continue to follow the Department of Health's COVID PEAK (black) highest risk rating guidance. <https://bit.ly/3ydkxol>

This guidance provides information about PPE tiers, healthcare worker movement, high-risk area healthcare worker mandatory testing and increased asymptomatic testing of staff in SCOVID wards, emergency departments and intensive care units.

Guidance and directions on healthcare worker movement – health care services

All nurses and midwives are reminded to ensure they are following the latest guidance and Chief Health Officer's on the movement of healthcare workers.

The Victorian Department of Health's '*Movement of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: guidance for health services and healthcare workers*' was updated on 25 August and 28 August 2021.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

It provides updated information for workers in a COVID streaming area who must now provide evidence of their negative test result to their employer prior to working at a new campus or health setting. This is in addition to the previous requirement of having three consecutive rostered days off and a negative test within 48 hours of starting at the new site.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Chief Health Officer Workplace (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions. These are designed to prevent avoidable movement of healthcare workers for their protection, to minimise the risk of cross-infection to other areas and facilities, to minimise the need to furlough staff and to protect the capacity and capability of the healthcare system.

ANMF will ensure that shifts and therefore income will not be lost as a result of limits on movement.

The movement of workers guidance document (28 August 2021) <https://bit.ly/2Wlr5P7>
Victorian Chief Health Officer Directions page <https://bit.ly/3hroSwW>

ANMF vaccine science in the context of COVID-19 webinar – free until 10 September

This webinar, hosted by Federal ANMF, was presented on 26 August and is available free to ANMF (Vic Branch) members until Friday 10 September 2021.

The fast-moving pace of COVID-19 science both from disease progression and treatments has been hard to keep up with. Nurses and midwives are well-positioned to advocate for science and safety. In this webinar, Dr Jessica Stokes-Parish (RN, PhD) and nurse immuniser Romy Blacklaw present the safety processes, research, surveillance of adverse events (including data on safety so far) and the difference between COVID-19 vaccines.

Watch webinar via the Federal ANMF Continuing Professional Education (CPE) website free until 10 September. Visit <https://www.anmf.org.au/cpe>

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 are imminent and are expected to 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

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Members are encouraged complete an online Member Assistance inquiry form via <https://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>

\$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. 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 have to 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

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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 print the poster which is part of this PDF newsflash. You can also download the 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' A4 poster via 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.