

Friday 8 October 2021

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update 59

Vaccination update, ICU nurse forums, maternity services forums, healthcare worker infection update, COVID payment advocacy and public sector pay rise

Victorian COVID-19 cases on 8 October 2021: there are 16,823 active cases (last Friday this figure was 10,944), including 1838 new locally acquired cases. There are 620 patients in hospital (up from 395 last Friday), including 114 in ICU, with 76 on ventilators. Another five people have died. There have now been 75 deaths in the current outbreak. Data links are at the end of this newsflash.

Virtual statewide ANMF Job Rep and HSR meeting

Thursday 14 October 2021, 2pm-3.15pm

ANMF Job Reps and Health and Safety Reps are invited to attend this statewide meeting (all sectors) for an opportunity to raise your and your members' issues and also hear from elected officials.

ANMF members are encouraged to discuss their issues and questions with their Job Rep so they can bring these to the meeting on your behalf.

Registration will close at 8.30am Wednesday 13 October 2021.

Job Reps and HSRs will be sent the registration link via text and email.

COVID-19 vaccination update

As members would be aware, the Victorian Chief Health Officer (CHO) has issued further directions extending the work environments in which employees on site must be vaccinated by certain dates.

These extensions mean that, for the vast majority of our members, they cannot attend at their work location without being vaccinated or having a valid medical exemption. On 7 October, the CHO updated the exemptions in

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these directions to include having an acute medical illness, including COVID-19 infection for up to six months (or earlier if the medical practitioner specifies an earlier date).

Risk assessments

ANMF has sought further legal advice about the directives and the potential impact on members.

That legal advice clarifies that the CHO directives create a requirement that each employer must comply with, and largely negates the previous ANMF advice/position about employers undertaking individual risk assessments, which was in the context of employers creating a mandatory vaccination policy.

The outcome of any risk assessment cannot result in a different outcome than the CHO Directive, which (subject to any successful legal challenge) makes it unlawful for your employer to allow you to attend at the work premises. No risk assessment can change this.

It would still be the case that employers would need to consider alternatives to dismissal for those not vaccinated and without a medical exemption. However, the breadth of the CHO directives leaves very limited opportunities for redeployment in a health or aged care setting.

Similarly, if a member was hesitant to be vaccinated while pregnant, employers should consider granting any leave request by an employee to enable their employment to continue, presuming the individual member is prepared to be vaccinated before returning from that leave.

Consent

We have received a number of queries as to whether a requirement to be vaccinated, or potentially lose your job, amounts to coercion or duress that would make consent invalid. This is particularly important for members who are assisting the vaccination rollout.

For conduct to amount to duress or coercion there must be pressure to amount to compulsion or the negation of choice as well as illegitimacy of such pressure. Even if it was established that the imposition of a condition of employment that an employee undertake vaccination amounted to compulsion or the negation of choice, our legal advice is that the pressure or compulsion must also be illegitimate, and that the CHO directives are not illegitimate.

COVID payment advocacy

ANMF has been in discussions for some weeks with the Andrews Government for a COVID payment that recognises the pressure and challenges of the current outbreak and the anticipated surge.

ANMF's proposal is designed to acknowledge the challenges nurses and midwives are facing as COVID hospitalisations rise and provide an incentive to stay when you are needed most. The more nurses and midwives working in acute areas – the less pressure and need for overtime and double shifts.

We are also seeking a payment that recognises the work of nurses and midwives across the health system who are caring for non-COVID patients but are working in a system under growing pressure.

Both payments must be a shift allowance, so it encourages nurses and midwives to return to acute care clinical areas and/or increase their hours.

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Healthcare worker infection update

Vaccination and improved personal protection equipment and infection control measures are working to protect nurses, midwives and personal care workers. New measures were introduced last year as a result of the work of the Healthcare Worker Infection Prevention and Welling Taskforce which included ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick and ANMF OH&S Co Ordinator Kathy Chrisfield.

There are currently two midwives and eight nurses with COVID-19. Healthcare COVID-19 case data can be viewed here <https://bit.ly/3lm8hPP>

In 2021, as at 26 September, two per cent of reported COVID-19 cases are healthcare workers. Last year, healthcare workers accounted for 21 per cent of the 20,375 COVID cases.

This year healthcare workers with COVID-19 were more likely to have acquired their infection in the community than at work. Of those COVID positive clinical healthcare workers – 12 per cent acquired their infection at work and 88 per cent in the community.

This will be reassuring to nurses and midwives being redeployed from their usual clinical area as part of surge workforce planning.

ANMF encourages all nurses, midwives and personal care workers to participate in their workplace fit testing program as a matter of urgency to ensure you, your family and your patients, clients and residents are protected.

Irrespective of fit testing, fit checking should be undertaken every time someone puts a P2/N95 respirator on. Read the WorkSafe Victoria advice via <https://bit.ly/3ddwqRT>

PPE supply

ANMF has been advised that personal protective equipment stocks are good and supply continues to arrive.

As at 7 October 2021, the Department of Health advises there were: 9 million N95 respirator masks, 35 million surgical masks, four million visors, five million safety glasses, 8 million isolation gowns and 199 million gloves. The report is available on the department's PPE information page via <https://bit.ly/3g5d96m>

Intensive care nurses' wellbeing forums

Victorian intensive care nurses are invited to join an online wellbeing forum hosted by Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria (NMHPV).

With six timeslots throughout October to choose from, the forums will provide nurses working in intensive care with an accessible, safe and supportive space in which to recognise and share the challenges you are currently facing.

Facilitated by a registered nurse with extensive ICU experience who also provides counselling support to Victoria's nursing workforce, the forums are designed to connect you with colleagues going through similar experiences, to share your successes – and fears – and to learn helpful tools and strategies to support your own health and wellbeing.

Each forum counts as one hour of professional development.

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To register for these private and confidential online forums, choose your preferred date and time below:

- **4pm Tuesday 12 October** <https://bit.ly/3FrwDQ7>
- **9am Wednesday 13 October** via <https://bit.ly/3oH5VwU>
- **8pm Friday 15 October** via <https://bit.ly/3DknXJi>
- **8pm Tuesday 19 October** via <https://bit.ly/3oK1Acw>
- **9am Wednesday 20 October** <https://bit.ly/3AhtT49>
- **4pm Thursday 21 October** <https://bit.ly/3DpVTnR>

Maternity services forums to discuss workforce strategies

ANMF is holding public sector midwifery member forums to discuss the Andrews Government's workforce funding boost and associated implementation of staffing and member wellbeing strategies.

The one-hour online forums will be held on Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 October.

Hosted by ANMF (Vic Branch) Assistant Secretary Madeleine Harradence and Maternity Services Officer Nicole Allan, the forums will provide midwifery members with an opportunity to discuss funding arrangements at their health service and provide feedback on recent staffing improvements or current challenges.

Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria staff will also attend to follow up on the midwifery wellbeing sessions ANMF held earlier this year in June.

The member-only forums will be private and confidential. Please register for only one of the three scheduled sessions:

Register now for **Wednesday 27 October – 10am or 4pm** via <https://bit.ly/3Dp8Sqe>

Register now for **Thursday 28 October – 10am** <https://bit.ly/3Dp8Sqe>

Public sector nurses' and midwives' pay rise

Many members will be aware that their second three per cent pay rise of the 2020 EBA will start from on or after the first full pay period after 1 December 2021.

Newer members may not be aware this upcoming increase is part of an eight-year wages deal endorsed at the final 2016 EBA statewide members meeting on 5 May 2016. This wage agreement has protected Victorian nurses' and midwives' wages in the current economic climate.

The NSW Government gave nurses and midwives a 0.3 per cent increase in the first year of the pandemic and a 1.5% pay rise in 2021. The Queensland Government announced a public sector worker pay freeze in 2020. QNMU (the Queensland branch of the ANMF) were dealt a six-month deferral of nurses' and midwives' April 2021 pay rise.

ANMF (Vic Branch) uses the public sector nurses and midwives EBA as the benchmark agreement for its negotiations in all other workplaces. This is why private acute members also received the historic 2019 pay uplift

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and continue to maintain pay parity or higher. This will vary according to timing of the pay increases, for example it is expected that Ramsay Health members will be higher than public sector members at the end of their agreement.

Month/Year	Pay Rise
April 2016	3.6 – 4.8%
April 2017	3%
April 2018	3.25%
April 2019 (historic pay rises see table 2)	variable depending on classification to reach net pay parity* with NSW nurses and midwives (see table below)
December 2020	3%
December 2021	3%
December 2022**	3%

* In 2019 all Victorian nurses and midwives achieved 'net' or 'after-tax' NSW pay parity. Presuming both the Victorian and NSW nurses and midwives are salary packaging, each will take home the same income. NSW nurses and midwives must give their state government 50% of their salary packaging benefit. Victorian nurses and midwives keep 100%.

** The 2020 -24 EBA expires 30 April 2024.

Victorian classification	Increase April 2019
Enrolled nurse	4%*
Grade 2 Year 1	3.17%
Grade 2 Year 2	4.99%
Grade 2 Year 3	6.65%
Grade 2 Year 4	8.58%
Grade 2 Year 5	10.36%
Grade 2 Year 6	11.89%
Grade 2 Year 7	13.96%
Grade 2 Year 8	15.76%
Grade 2 Year 9	13.07%
Grade 2 Year 10	10.52%
Clinical Nurse/ Midwife Specialist	11.77%
GRADE 3A Y1	10.69%
GRADE 3A Y2	10.69%
GRADE 3B Y1	11.02%
GRADE 3B Y2	11.02%
A/NMUM YEAR 1	13.81%
A/NMUM YEAR 2	15.14%
N/MUM Year 1	14.9 – 19%
N/MUM Year 2	12.2 – 16.1%
N/Mum Year 3	9.6 – 13.5%
Grade 4A, Y1	9.88%
Grade 4A, Y2	7.75%
Grade 4B, Y1	10.83%
Grade 4B, Y2	8.67%
Nurse Practitioner	
NP Year 1	15.16%
NP Year 2	13.23%

*Enrolled nurses received higher increases in the 2012-16 EBA and continue to be the highest paid ENs in the country.

Table 3. State wage comparisons - base rate before allowances and penalties				
	Victoria*	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia
EN Level 2.7	\$1328.30	\$1232.90	\$1268.90	\$1266.50
RN/midwife Grade 2, Year 1	\$1260.80	\$1259	\$1388.90	\$1316
RN/midwife Grade 2, Year 5	\$1554.60	\$1542	\$1650	\$1530
RN/midwife Grade 2, year 8	\$1780.80	\$1767.70	\$1781.45	\$1714
A/NMUM	\$2061.80			
Nurse/Midwife Manager 2	\$2271.15	\$2322.70	\$2325.55	\$2176.14
Nurse/Midwife Manager 4	\$2436.70	\$2385.30	\$2383.40	\$2244.16

* December 2021 rate

Branch update – construction on member accommodation starts

Construction has started on the ANMF's short-term affordable accommodation for members in Melbourne's CBD.

ANMF is redeveloping 240-248 Victoria Street, adjacent to the ANMF building, in the Queen Victoria Market precinct. Scheduled for completion at the end of 2022, the eight-storey development will include 33 serviced apartments.

Members will be able to book the rooms and units to attend ANMF conferences and courses at the Education Centre. While online platforms have provided new ways for regional and rural members to attend our events, courses and meetings, it will still be important to have face-to-face options in the future.

It will also be available for regional and metropolitan members to book a short holiday or a night in the city.

Thank you again to all those ANMF members who responded to our survey about where it is you prefer to holiday in regional Victoria. These responses will help guide us in the future as we look to invest in purchasing member holiday accommodation in regional locations. We also aim to support local regional Victorian communities.

Discounted quality holiday accommodation is a popular member benefit offered by the Western Australian and South Australian branches of the ANMF and other Victorian unions such as the Police Association Victoria.

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Pandemic misinformation

Social media is a great tool for communication, but also for misinformation and false information masquerading as fact. ANMF would like to correct the record in relation to what we have secured for members during the pandemic. ANMF's advocacy and support for members includes:

1. No ANMF membership fee rise for two years – in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years.
2. Secured two half days additional special paid leave for public sector nurses to have their vaccination.
3. Secured four days additional special paid leave if you were unable to work due to symptoms following vaccination. Secured an additional two days special paid leave if a booster is required.
4. Secured additional special paid leave for members required to furlough.
5. Secured hotel accommodation for members who needed to isolate temporarily or longer-term away from vulnerable household members.
6. Secured fast-tracked COVID-19 WorkCover claims for nurses, midwives and personal care workers who contracted the virus at work during the second wave in 2020.
7. Secured ongoing weekly payments (equivalent to their average weekly earnings) for public and private acute bank staff who lost work during the elective surgery pause in 2020.
8. Secured \$600,000 in additional Andrews Government funding for the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria to support nurses and midwives and carers during the pandemic.
9. Conducted re-orientation to acute care courses for non-clinical nurses at no cost to members who wanted to re-join the acute workforce if they were needed.
10. Negotiated the framework for the nursing and midwifery student employment models to ensure a consistent position description across the state. Registered Undergraduate Students of Nursing (RUSONs) and Registered Undergraduate Students of Midwifery (RUSOMs) are now embedded in almost every major public hospital across Victoria.
11. Started the pandemic surge workforce register because hundreds of nurses and midwives were contacting our office asking how they could help. We transferred this register to the Victorian health department.

This is all in addition to our core work answering and resolving more than 12,000 member inquiries in relation to PPE, redeployment for higher risk members, employment issues and leave.

ANMF will continue to advocate and achieve on our members behalf important issues such as adequate PPE, fit testing and checking, appropriate ventilation, staff amenities as well as represent and support our members through the pandemic and this third wave. This includes negotiating with the Victorian Government a surge workforce allowance.

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).

The Branch triages member inquiries so Member Assistance can respond to urgent matters, such as terminations, APHRA notifications, violent or aggressive incidents, disciplinarys, meetings and bullying and escalate to the relevant ANMF Organiser or other appropriate staff without members waiting on the phone for extended periods.

We respond to urgent matters within one business day, and non-urgent queries within three business days.

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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.