

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update 64a

Updated furloughing guidance and special paid leave frequently asked questions

The Victorian Department of Health has issued updated guidance that explains the changed return to work of 'close contacts'. It also answers the many member questions ANMF has raised in our meetings with the Victorian Government, including the payment of special paid leave when in quarantine.

These FAQs also reflect the changes to furlough agreed at national cabinet on 13 January 2022 that are intended to relieve the workforce crisis caused by five per cent of nurses and midwives on furlough every day. Key questions include:

When can I access special paid leave?

1. If you need to provide care to someone in your household who is a confirmed (PCR) or probable rapid antigen test (RAT) COVID-19 case (for example, a child) you are a close contact and will be able to access special leave for the 7-day quarantine period. Following the 7-day quarantine-period you can use your available personal/carer's leave in line with the leave arrangements that are available from the EBA.
2. Employees who are close contacts, and are well, symptom-free and return a negative RAT or PCR, are eligible to work under the exemption. Staff who do not wish to attend work under the exemption, and where it is agreed that working from home is not reasonable, practical or appropriate, will have access to 7-days special leave for their quarantine period.
3. If you become COVID-19 positive, you are required to isolate for 7 days. Special leave is available for the 7-day isolation period. If you are still symptomatic following the 7-day isolation period employees will use their personal leave.
4. To get vaccinated (up to 4 hours including travel time).
5. If you feel unwell following vaccination (up to 2 days per vaccination).

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

I have heard I can come back to work early even though I am in quarantine, is that correct?

1. Yes, if you have no symptoms and return a negative RAT, you can come back to work early (but otherwise remain in quarantine) – subject to conditions.
2. This is entirely at your choice.

I am obliged to undertake a RAT – who pays?

1. The employer is responsible for providing RATs.
2. If you are not able to access a RAT, you must remain, or return to, quarantine.

For more details read the Victorian Department of Health's **FAQs Return to work updated guidance for healthcare workers** via <https://bit.ly/3rejweE>

Need ANMF advice or support?

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

COVID stressed?

While it may feel easier in the short term to muddle through, Nursing and Midwifery Health Program CEO and registered nurse Glenn Taylor says this coping strategy has its limitations. Members are encouraged to contact the free, confidential NMHPV service staffed predominantly 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 you may need ongoing support.

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

(Please note the NMHPV is a counselling support service, they cannot provide furloughing or employment advice – for this advice complete an ANMF member assistance form.)

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

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