



**Australian  
Nursing &  
Midwifery  
Federation**  
VICTORIAN BRANCH

# Newsflash

COVID-19 information for aged care members

Friday 28 January 2022

## **COVID-19 URGENT UPDATE**

### **Private aged care facilities (for-profit and not-for-profit)**

#### **Frequently asked questions**

The following information is based on the most common member assistance inquiries submitted by private and not-for-profit aged care members.

#### **DUAL EMPLOYMENT**

##### **I work at two aged care facilities, what do I do if there is a covid outbreak at one of the facilities?**

The Pandemic (Additional Industry Obligations) Order 2022 (No. 3) outlines at section 13 the obligations during an outbreak. This information is taken directly from that order (<https://bit.ly/34n07jX>):

*2. If a care facility worker is working at more than one work premises for two or more different employers:*

*(a) the care facility worker must provide a written declaration to each employer to advise them that the worker is working at more than one work premises and must provide details of the other work premises to each employer;*

*(b) each employer must maintain a record of all care facility workers who have disclosed to the employer under paragraph (a) that they are working across more than one work premises.*

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

3. Despite the Visitors to Hospitals and Care Facilities Order, an employer in relation to a work premises that is a care facility in Victoria must not permit an employee or contractor (excluding a visiting health care professional) to enter the care facility where:

- (a) the employee or contractor has, on or after 4 October 2020, worked at another care facility; and
- (b) at the time the employee or contractor worked at that other care facility, a confirmed case was present at that other facility, unless:
  - (i) at least 7 days have elapsed since the last time the employee or contractor worked at that other facility while a confirmed case was present; and
  - (ii) the employee or contractor:
    - (A) has undertaken a COVID-19 PCR test on or after 6 days from the day that the employee or contractor last worked at that other facility while a confirmed case was present; and
    - (B) received confirmation that the results of the test undertaken pursuant to subparagraph (A) were negative.

In summary, you need to only work at the site that has the outbreak, until 7 days have passed and you have returned a negative PCR result following a test on day 6.

## **I work for an aged care provider and a hospital, can I remain working at both?**

Section 16 The Pandemic (Additional Industry Obligations) Order 2022 (No. 3) imposes obligations on hospitals. The following information is taken directly from that order (<https://bit.ly/34n07jX>):

1. *In relation to those parts of a hospital that are a high-risk hospital work premises, an employer must arrange operations at the work premises so as to have high risk hospital work premises workers working consistently with the same group of other high-risk hospital work premises workers where reasonably practicable, including (but not limited to):*
  - a. *developing separate shifts in a way that minimises physical interactions between groups of high-risk hospital work premises workers attending different shifts;*
  - b. *separating high-risk hospital work premises workers into work areas;*
  - c. *dividing work areas up further into separate teams;*
  - d. *providing separate break areas for the separate teams;*
  - e. *requiring teams to use separate entrances and exits from other teams; and*
  - f. *where high-risk hospital work premises workers are from the same household, ensuring they work in the same shift and work area.*
2. *Subject to subclause (3), an employer in relation to a high-risk hospital work premises must not require or permit a high-risk hospital work premises worker to perform work at more than one work premises of the employer.*

3. *Subclause (2) does not apply where it is not practicable to limit a high-risk hospital work premises worker to only one work premises.*
4. *Where subclause (3) applies, the employer must be able to demonstrate the systems of work which it has put in place to minimise the number of high-risk hospital work premises workers working across multiple work premises.*

While there is no order preventing you from working across the acute and aged setting, ANMF is encouraging members to limit their employment to one setting to reduce the risk of transmission.

## **Does the ANMF support single-site employment?**

The ANMF supports all measures taken to ensure you and the public are not at an increased risk of contracting and transmitting Covid-19. This at times will mean limiting your employment to one facility/ward/provider (sites).

The ANMF encourages any member concerned about working at multiple sites to speak with their managers and work one site if possible. This may mean picking up additional shifts at one site whilst taking unpaid leave from another.

There is no federal funding to assist with this, the federal funding ceased on 3 December 2021.

## **LEAVE**

### **My child is a close contact or has contracted covid. Am I entitled to paid special leave?**

The entitlement to paid special leave is at the discretion of your employer.

If your child needs to isolate or quarantine and you have responsibility for their care, you may utilise your personal leave for this purpose should your employer not grant you paid special leave.

This is different to the Victorian health department's guidance for public sector health and aged care services. ANMF has strongly advocated private aged care employers follow this advice, but it is not enforceable.

### **I have exhausted all my personal leave, do I qualify for any government payments during isolation or quarantine?**

Payments are available if you don't have paid leave entitlements and lose income due to self-isolating or quarantine or providing care to someone self-isolating or in quarantine.

**COVID-19 test isolation payment:** the Victorian Government provides a \$450 payment if you are required to isolate while waiting for a PCR test result. Rapid antigen tests are not covered by this program. Details, eligibility criteria and applications via <https://bit.ly/3fWygqQ>

**Disaster leave payment:** the Federal Government has recently changed its disaster leave payment if you have no paid leave entitlements and test positive, are a close contact, have to care for someone with COVID or have to care for a child under 16 years who must isolate or quarantine. You must have a PCR test or evidence of registering a RAT.

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For each seven days you may be eligible for a \$450 payment (loss of between 8 – 20 hours work) or a \$750 payment (loss of more than 20 hours). This payment is means tested (to be eligible you must have access to less than \$10,000) and must be declared as taxable income. More information, eligibility, and applications via <https://bit.ly/3r1JraM>

## **I am due to commence annual leave shortly, can my employer cancel this leave?**

Your leave can only be cancelled by agreement. Your employer may contact you to ask you to return in the workplace or cancel your leave, but this is merely a conversation and cannot be done unilaterally.

## **VACCINATIONS**

### **Are private aged care staff required to have the third vaccine dose?**

All Victorian health and aged care, emergency services, correctional facilities, quarantine accommodation and food distribution workers are required to have their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

ANMF encourages all members – nurses and personal care workers – to have their third dose as soon as you are eligible to ensure you are protected from severe illness, hospitalisation and death. On 19 January 2022, the Victorian Government reduced the interval between the second and third dose from four months to three months)

Your deadline will depend on your eligibility and your second dose deadline:

**12 February 2022 deadline** – nurses, midwives and carers who are eligible for a third dose on or before 12 January 2022. (You were eligible if it was four months or longer since your second dose)

**1 March 2022 deadline** – residential aged care nurses and personal carer workers who are not yet eligible for their third dose must have it within three months and two weeks of the second dose deadline which was 15 November 2021.

**29 March 2022 deadline** – nurses and midwives working in hospitals and healthcare services who are not yet eligible for their third dose must have it within three months and two weeks of the second dose deadline which was 15 December 2021.

**Medical exemptions** – as previously, if you are unable to be vaccinated due to medical issues you will be required to provide evidence to your employer from an authorised medical practitioner. This evidence must be from one of the following:

1. a general practice registrar on an approved 3GA training placement
2. a public health physician
3. an infectious disease physician
4. a clinical immunologist
5. gynaecologist

6. obstetrician
7. a GP who is vocationally registered
8. a GP who is a fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
9. a GP who is a fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

Your GP will be able to advise you if they meet one of the above criteria.

Please note that current Federal Department of Health guidance is that you can be vaccinated following a COVID-19 infection, once acute symptoms ease.

### **Book your third dose**

Federal Government 'find a clinic' (chemists and medical clinics) <https://bit.ly/3Eiz7yp>

Victorian Government hubs and pop ups <https://bit.ly/3dZjuC6>

### **Will I receive this dose at my workplace?**

If you received your first and second dose at your workplace, you may be offered your third dose through your workplace as well.

To ensure you meet the deadline above ANMF is encouraging all members to book your third dose via the links above.

### **What if I am not due for my third dose by the required deadline?**

All healthcare workers who received their second dose prior the 15 December 2021 deadline will be required to meet the third dose deadline, exception will be made for medical reasons as per above.

### **If I become unwell as a result of receiving the vaccine, do I get access to special leave?**

For private aged care employees special leave is provided at the discretion of your employer.

## **PPE AND TESTING REQUIREMENTS**

### **My facility is not providing P2/N95 masks, do they need to provide these?**

All healthcare workers providing direct care or working within the patient/client/resident zone for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should have access to P2/N95 respirators. The choice between P2/N95 respirator or surgical mask should be based on an assessment of risk of transmission. Your employer is required to undertake a risk assessment in consultation with Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) to determine which masks are utilised.

Assessment of risk of transmission of COVID-19 to healthcare workers should include consideration of:

- the individual patient/client/resident's pre-existing likelihood of COVID-19
- patient/client/resident factors
- physical location of care.

If your workplace doesn't have a Health and Safety Rep – find out how to elect one via

<https://anmfvic.asn.au/hsr> and then contact your ANMF Organiser via [records@anmfvic.asn.au](mailto:records@anmfvic.asn.au)

## **Is fit testing mandatory in private aged care?**

Healthcare workers who wear P2/N95 respirators should complete fit testing before first use, and perform a fit (seal) check properly each time they are used.

Each P2/N95 mask fit test takes between 45 and 90 minutes to complete and requires specialist equipment and an appropriately skilled person to conduct the fit test.

In situations where fit testing has not yet been carried out, and a P2/N95 respirator is recommended for use, a fit-checked P2/N95 respirator is preferred to a surgical mask.

The ANMF continues to advocate for stronger aged care rules in relation to P2/N95 masks and fit testing and we will inform members should the recommendation change in this space.

## **If there is an outbreak in my facility, what PPE should we be wearing?**

If there is an outbreak at your facility, this would be deemed as a likely high risk of COVID-19 transmission, therefore it is recommended that an P2/N95 respirator is used, gown/apron, gloves and a face shield or eye protection.

In addition, your workplace must develop a procedure on donning (putting on) and doffing (take off) the PPE provided to ensure that risk of transmission is minimised.

For information on PPE requirements, fit testing and P2/N95 masks, read:

**Federal Department of Health PPE for health care workers guidance** <https://bit.ly/32yKpIq>

**WorkSafe Victoria advice** via <https://bit.ly/3ddwqRT>

## **My employer has told us we need to perform a RAT every 5 days, do I need to source these myself?**

If your employer has made rapid antigen testing (RAT) a requirement of your employment, your employer needs to provide the tests. Testing is to be undertaken in paid time.

## **What happens if I or my employer cannot find RATs, can I attend my shift?**

Yes you can, rapid antigen testing is only one mechanism of limiting the spread of COVID-19. If you are unable to complete testing your employer should implement additional measure to ensure they have reduced the risk. Additional measure may include additional PPE.

## **FATIGUE MANAGEMENT**

### **I am picking up additional shifts but am getting exhausted is there an obligation for me to continue working the additional hours?**

You are only required to work your contracted hours. There is no obligation for you to continue to do extra shifts and these should only be placed on your roster after a discussion and agreement by you.

## **RAISING WORKLOAD ISSUES**

### **We are currently short staffed which is increasing the workload of myself and my colleagues, what can I do about this?**

If you have concerns over the care provided or the health and safety of yourself and others you are obligated to raise these matters with management. ANMF encourages you to do this by completing an incident report, and raising the matter with your Health and Safety Representative.

### **I raised workload concerns with my manager but haven't heard back?**

If you have raised the matter in writing either via email or an incident report with you manager and you haven't had a response, forward the email/report to ANMF via [records@anmfvic.asn.au](mailto:records@anmfvic.asn.au)

ANMF will follow up with you and your workplace.

## **WORKCOVER**

### **I am COVID-19 positive, can I make a WorkCover claim?**

If you test positive to COVID-19 and you believe this could be as a result of your work, the ANMF strongly recommends that you submit a WorkCover claim.

For more information about your rights and how to make a claim read ANMF COVID -19 newflash #66 Wednesday 19 January 2022 via <https://bit.ly/3fOtBtB>

## ADVICE, REPRESENTATION AND SUPPORT

### How to access ANMF support

Members can complete an online Member Assistance inquiry form via [anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance](https://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.

Not ready to call? Reflect on your circumstances and wellbeing and fill out the NMHPV's self-care plan [questionnaire](#). You will be emailed a self-care plan.

Contact NMHPV on 9415 7551 or email [admin@nmhp.org.au](mailto:admin@nmhp.org.au). Find out more at [nmhp.org.au](https://nmhp.org.au).

### Got a colleague not receiving ANMF emails?

If you have an ANMF colleague who is not receiving these newsflash emails, please pass this on and let them know they can re-subscribe via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/resubscribe>

### Encourage your colleagues to join ANMF

Please invite your aged care nursing and personal care worker colleagues to join their union so they have access to support, advice and information about their employment. Let them know they can join via <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/join>

### Important COVID-19 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 [anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19](https://anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19) regularly.

*This newsflash has also been sent to agency nurses who may be working in private aged care.*

**ANMF Job Reps and Health and Safety Reps are encouraged to display this newsflash in the workplace.**