



**Australian
Nursing &
Midwifery
Federation**
VICTORIAN BRANCH

Newsflash

Thursday 23 April 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) Update #7

Bank staff to receive back pay for lost average weekly hours, Federal Government makes it easier for employers to vary your EBA, surge workforce planning means Victoria is unlikely to need temporary ratio law change

Members are encouraged to read our newsflashes and the COVID-19 information for health workers provided on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Commonwealth Department of Health websites.

Information is updated regularly and at short notice. ANMF has collated the important links all in one place, so you don't have to go looking. Please bookmark and check this page regularly – anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19

Members with COVID-19-related employment questions can ask via the Member Assistance online inquiry form via anmfvic.asn.au/covid-19. Please read through the information on our website before submitting a question. Member Assistance is no longer taking phone inquiries as ANMF staff are now working remotely. Members with complex inquiries will still have phone contact with staff.

ANMF has written to all private, not-for-profit, local government and stand-alone community health centre employers urging them to follow the DHHS advice in the Coronavirus Guidance Note on Employment-Related Matters (bit.ly/2UhDSU2). This document was last updated on 22 April.

Latest coronavirus statistics in Victoria

As of 22 April 2020, the Victorian Chief Health Officer reported:

- the state's number of COVID-19 cases was 1336 - no net increase from the previous day. The total includes two new cases and two existing cases reclassified to another state, as per protocol.
- of the 1,336 confirmed cases in Victoria, 1,137 people have recovered from the virus
- no new deaths were reported and 15 people have died in Victoria of COVID-19

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- 29 people are in Victorian hospitals with COVID-19, including 12 in intensive care
- 135 cases have an unknown source of infection, a decrease of 3 since yesterday
- 1243 people have recovered. More than 90,000 tests have been completed.

View the latest Victorian statistics via bit.ly/34Et8Ug and the latest national statistics via bit.ly/2RyEXX1

Employers can legally propose EBA entitlement changes – ANMF recommends a NO vote

On Thursday 16 April, the Federal Government amended the *Fair Work Act* Regulations to allow changes to enterprise bargaining agreement entitlements by a vote of employees with only one day's notice.

The government argued the change would give employers greater flexibility to respond quickly to workplace challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previously the consultation period was one week.

The new 24-hour minimum bypasses appropriate consultation with you and the ANMF and will allow some employers to use the pandemic to take away rights and pay. Some employer groups are already calling for the changes, which they describe as 'red tape', to be permanent.

If your employer proposes a variation or change to your EBA that is not clearly endorsed by the ANMF and where you have not been given enough time to be properly consulted, **vote NO**.

If you hear of a proposal to alter your pay or conditions, contact the ANMF for advice and assistance straight away by completing a Member Assistance form via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance and remember vote NO to any proposal that has not been endorsed by the ANMF.

Public and private acute bank staff to be paid for lost shifts

The agreement reached by government with the private sector requires that private bank nurses and midwives are retained and paid an average of their historical hours worked, operable from the beginning of April.

The Victorian Government confirmed on 22 April that the same requirement will apply to the public health services.

Effective from 31 March, the date of the agreement with private hospitals, and until elective surgery restrictions have been completely lifted, private and public health services should remunerate their bank staff for the equivalent of their weekly average earnings over the last 12 months. Those part-time staff who have previously worked additional shifts above their contracted hours are also able to have these shifts (worked over the last 12 months) averaged and paid for. This also includes nurses working in mental health.

The Department of Health and Human Services says this will ensure bank staff remain employed and available for any COVID-related or other work during this uncertain time. While demand directly related to COVID-19 remains low, these staff may be able to assist with planning and preparation for outbreaks, commissioning of expanded capacity, training, PPE and equipment, preparation for elective surgery increases and assistance with new models of care including home-based care.

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Health Minister Jenny Mikakos announced the reintroduction of more category two and some category three surgery across Victoria's public and private hospitals from 27 April. See the government's media release via bit.ly/2RUvfhR

ANMF advises affected bank staff members to provide your manager with information about your lost shifts since 31 March and apply for payment. If after escalation to your manager, you continue to have an issue contact ANMF Member Assistance via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance

Temporary change to *Safe Patient Care Act* as part of COVID-19 response

Cautious amendments to the *Safe Patient Care Act* are part of a range of temporary emergency measures the Andrews Government is planning to implement to support Victorians and continue delivering services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Bill 2020* was introduced to Parliament on Thursday 23 April. The bill sets out a range of temporary changes including the protection of tenants and injured workers and changes to the justice system.

The bill allows the Health Minister, after consulting with the ANMF (Vic Branch) and an employer representative, to relax ratio enforcement in a particular hospital, or a part of a hospital, where the COVID -19 pandemic places extraordinary demand on services.

The Minister's power is subject to consideration that compliance with a ratio, or a ratio variation, is impracticable due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 45D of the bill states: **'The operator of a hospital; that is the subject of a declaration in effect under section 45C(1) must, as far as is practicable, staff the hospital in a manner that takes into account the safety of patients and staff, having regard to staffing levels and the skill mix of the staff.'**

The changes to the Act are automatically repealed in six months.

ANMF is confident that the social distancing measures Victoria has had in place, and continues to have, will mean the Minister will never need to make such a declaration.

The scenario of declaring a hospital, or a part of a hospital, exempt from ratio enforcement would be only be necessary if the hospital had exhausted all of the additional surge workforce options. This would mean:

1. a significant number of the hospital's nursing workforce, its nurse bank, and agency staff, were unwell or in isolation
2. the hospital had exhausted the thousands of nurses on the department's additional workforce register
3. the hospital had exhausted the hundreds of nurses undergoing acute skills re-orientation courses at the ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre, as well as those undergoing intensive care training and the returned retired nurses

We are confident that the Minister will not need to make a declaration under the proposed legislation given the thousands of nurses that we have in the system already, the thousands of nurses on additional workforce registers and that we are currently in a situation where some nurses have no patients to look after and bank, and agency staff are not currently getting shifts.

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Hospitals must access and exhaust the surge staffing contingency plans before we are in a situation that relaxing ratio enforcement would even need to be considered.

Read the Victorian Government media bit.ly/2Knu7Pz

Meanwhile the ANMF is working with government representatives to finalise the amended *Safe Patient Care Act* which will deliver the [2018 Andrews Government election commitments for further improved nurse/midwife patient ratios](#).

PPE guidance updated and employers may collect but not re-use single use PPE

To avoid confusion about the re-use and collection of single-use PPE, ANMF has confirmed the following advice with the Department of Health and Human Services PPE taskforce chair Professor Andrew Wilson:

- there is no recommendation at this point for re-use of single-use PPE, of any description
- some employers may be collecting used PPE in case of a need in a surge scenario, but this should not be re-used at this point
- work is being done around re-use and sterilisation options in case this is required in a surge capacity, and further information will be provided if and when this is required.

The PPE taskforce is currently focussing on face shields and providing clarity around single use and reusable face shields. The taskforce is looking at standardising methods of sterilisation, and providing clear, consistent PPE advice as well as guidance around receptacles and processes for collecting the single use PPE.

WorkSafe Victoria and the PPE taskforce are both working on providing clear, consistent guidance around P2 and N95 masks. ANMF hopes to be able to include these in our next COVID-19 newsflash.

DHHS has updated its guide to putting on and taking off your PPE via bit.ly/2zqYT89

Members are also encouraged to read the DHHS COVID-19 – a guide to the conventional use of PPE which was updated on 20 April via bit.ly/2yBnmaa. The information is consistent with the previous guide, but easier to use. Please read it all, including the clarifications in fine print at the end.

Federal ANMF has developed a series of evidence briefs including COVID-19: personal protective equipment which can be viewed via bit.ly/3asr5Ed

AHPRA offers registration renewal financial hardship payment plan

The Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency is offering a two-part payment plan for nurses and midwives experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19.

Nurses and midwives who meet the criteria will be able to make the first registration fee payment now and the second payment in October.

Federal ANMF has lobbied AHPRA opposing its \$15 fee rise and called on the regulator to keep registration renewal at the 2019 level of \$160.

All nurses and midwives must renew their registration by 31 May. Details and hardship application form are available via bit.ly/2Kt7ngY

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Pharmacies employing/engaging nurse immunisers

DHHS advises that pharmacies may employ or engage nurse immunisers who can act under the [Nurse Immuniser Secretary Approval](#) to provide immunisation services in the pharmacy or as part of an outreach or mobile vaccination service of the pharmacy or pharmacy depot.

However, the nurse immuniser must be a registered nurse, and not an enrolled nurse, and must have completed an approved immunisation training course.

The nurse immuniser also needs to have access to a medical practitioner for advice in accordance with the requirements of the Secretary Approval.

Pharmacists cannot supervise nurses or other persons to immunise patients on their behalf.

New clinical assessment modules and an extra \$60 CPD online credit for members

The ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre has added a further six modules to its new series of clinical assessment online modules to support nurses wanting to develop their clinical skills in recognising and responding to acute clinical deterioration, including the COVID-19 patient. The 12 one-hour modules on the CPD Portal are:

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 1 - Introduction to acute care / recognising and responding to clinical deterioration

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-1

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 2 - Airway management and unconsciousness

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-2

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 3 - Respiratory failure

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-3

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 4 – Oxygen therapy

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-4

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 5 – Hypotension

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-5

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 6 - Sepsis

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-6

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 7 – Non-invasive ventilation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-7

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 8 – Mechanical ventilation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-8

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 9 – Arterial blood gasses

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-9

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 10 – Advanced ventilation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-10

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ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 11 – Advanced ventilation (prone)

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-11

ANMF Clinical Assessment Module 12 – CXR interpretation

anmfvic.asn.au/cam-12

All members receive annual credit to use on the ANMF (Vic Branch) CPD Portal. Full and part-time members receive a \$400 annual credit* (or \$120 for members on parental leave and \$80 for student members).

All ANMF members will receive an additional \$60 credit to use on the CPD Portal as a special member benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To access the new online clinical assessment modules, visit cpd.anmfvic.asn.au

Let your colleagues know that ANMF has halved the module price to make it easier for any non-members to complete these important modules. Non-members should click 'non-member login' to log in or create an account.

*ANMF (Vic Branch) members' annual credit is renewed every July.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre virtual classroom courses

Information about some ANMF (Vic Branch) Education Centre courses moving to a virtual classroom was included in the last newsflash. In case you missed it – you can find these courses and registration links via anmfvic.asn.au/virtualclassroom

Reorientation to acute care

As part of its efforts to assist in the preparation of an additional surge workforce, the ANMF (Vic Branch) continues to offer a two-day in-person course for nurses wanting to refresh their skills in the acute sector. More than 100 nurses have attended the workshops and are prepared to work in hospitals in the event a surge workforce is required.

The workshops, generously funded by First State Super, HESTA and the ANMF, are provided at no cost to nurses.

To put your name on the waiting list visit anmfvic.asn.au/reorientation

COVID-19 hardship assistance for ANMF (Vic Branch) members

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a huge economic impact globally and some ANMF members may be experiencing financial hardship. The ANMF (Vic Branch) encourages members who are not able to access payment from their employer and are experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 to contact us via this form: anmfvic.asn.au/COVID19hardship. All inquiries will be treated with the strictest confidence.

This fund is in addition to the usual assistance members can apply for through the Florence Nightingale Fund.

Advice for higher risk healthcare workers during COVID-19

A separate newsflash will be issued soon.

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