

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update #28

Greater Sydney and NSW Central Coast declared a red zone; updated PPE and infection control guidance; fit testing underway; third aged care workforce retention payment; insurance for students on clinical placement

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 <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance> Please read the information on our website before submitting a question. Member Assistance is not taking phone inquiries as the majority of ANMF staff are still working remotely. All online inquiries are triaged to ensure urgent inquiries are prioritised. Members whom ANMF deems have complex inquiries will still have phone contact with staff.

The DHHS Coronavirus Guidance Note on Employment-Related Matters (bit.ly/2UhDSU2) was last updated **22 December 2020**.

Latest COVID-19 statistics

Healthcare Worker COVID-19 data dashboard <https://bit.ly/3jQT5q4>

Victorian COVID-19 data dashboard <https://bit.ly/3j5vJwC>

Victorian Chief Health Officer daily update <https://bit.ly/34Et8Ug>

Victorian Chief Health Officer daily media release <https://bit.ly/2EDiQLb>

Victorian high-risk locations, outbreaks, hospital admissions and deaths via <https://bit.ly/33szLKu>

National statistics <https://bit.ly/2RyEXX1>

National residential aged care cases and deaths <https://bit.ly/32FdfwD>

COVID-19 stressed? Take the self-care quiz

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 www.nmhp.org.au

Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria survey

Please help us assess awareness and use of the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria, and your past or continuing need for support, by taking this survey. Take the 10-minute survey now <https://bit.ly/2U4vqrB>

ANMF Christmas and New Year office closure

ANMF (Vic Branch) wishes members and your families and friends a safe, peaceful and happy Christmas and 2021. We all hope it looks a lot different to 2020.

The ANMF will be closed from 1pm, Thursday 24 December 2020 and re-open 8.45am, Monday 4 January 2021. During this time an ANMF officer will be on-call (except on public holidays and weekends) between 8.45am and 5pm, for urgent matters only, such as an unfair dismissal or termination. Please call 9275 9333 and follow the prompts.

For non-urgent matters, you may find the information you need on our member assistance page or complete our member assistance inquiry form via <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

Member assistance inquiries lodged within the branch closure dates will be responded to after 4 January 2021 with priority given to the most urgent.

For information about support services and the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria during the Christmas closure period visit <https://bit.ly/3pbdb12>

Current restrictions

The current restrictions came into place at 11.59pm, Sunday 6 December 2020. These include:

Public gatherings: up to 100 people can gather outdoors from any number of households, infants under 12 months are not included in the cap.

Visitors to the home: up to 30 visitors can visit a home in a day (infants under 12 months are not counted in the cap). Visitors may be from any number of households and may visit either together or separately.

Face masks: you must continue to carry a face mask with you at all times when you leave the home, unless you have a lawful exemption. This is in case you need a face mask, if for example you aren't able to keep 1.5 metres distance from other people. Face masks are mandatory on public transport, and when in taxis or share ride vehicles. Face masks must also be worn inside shopping centres and large retail stores.

Premier's statement 6 December 2020 <https://bit.ly/2Lf3gZA>

COVID summer – how we live <https://bit.ly/33YNCYK>

COVID summer – how we work <https://bit.ly/39Z1fLI>

Information about face masks in Victoria <https://bit.ly/2WEsC5J>

Greater Sydney and NSW Central Coast declared a 'red zone'

On 20 December 2020, the Victorian Government declared the Greater Sydney area and the New South Wales Central Coast a 'red zone'. Anyone who lives in these communities or visited since 11 December cannot enter

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Victoria. Anyone found trying to enter Victoria in breach of the orders will be subject to 14-day mandatory quarantine.

Residents living in the rest of regional New South Wales need to apply for a permit to enter Victoria.

Those living in local government areas along the border do not need a permit and can use their driver's license to travel between Victoria and NSW.

For further information read the Victorian Government media release 'Further measures to protect Victoria' (20 December 2020) <http://bit.ly/37EAXMZ>

Updated employment matters guidance

The Department of Health and Human Services has updated its employment matters guidance document. Information includes updated advice regarding 'higher risk' employees and travel and isolation advice for healthcare workers returning from interstate.

Read the DHHS Coronavirus Guidance Note on Employment-Related Matters <https://bit.ly/2UhDSU2>

Employment stability payment

The Victorian Government's employment stability payment for public sector nurses and midwives was phased out in stages from 23 November 2020 with all access to the payment ceasing from 14 December 2020. The payment assisted nurses and midwives maintain their historical weekly average earnings if they were impacted by the reduction in services such as elective surgery. A similar arrangement was in place for nurses and midwives in private acute health services.

The DHHS has asked employers to be mindful of scenarios in which a part-time or casual employee may continue to experience a negative impact on their normal pattern of hours due to COVID-19-related restrictions or limitations on the normal activity. Employers are encouraged to continue to make a reasonable adjustment to any affected employee's pay to reduce disadvantage.

Third aged care workforce retention bonus payment – due in early 2021

The Federal Government will **pay a third aged care workforce retention bonus to employers and agencies in January 2021. Employers must make the payment to their workers within two pay periods of receiving the funds.**

The Federal Government has paid residential and home care aged care workers involved in direct care two COVID-19 retention bonuses in July and September.

The taxable payment is worth up to \$800 and is based on employment in the sector as at 30 November. Part-time employees will receive pro rata payments.

To raise an issue or make a complaint about your retention payments read our 2 September COVID-19 newsflash #22 for details <https://bit.ly/3p47m6i>

Federal ANMF aged care retention bonus information <https://bit.ly/3mTJEIb>

Federal Department of Health aged care retention information <https://bit.ly/3nMpzVa>

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Asymptomatic testing continues in residential aged care

Regular asymptomatic testing of staff continues in residential aged care. Metropolitan aged care workers are undergoing fortnightly testing. Regional aged care workers are being tested monthly.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services says testing is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged to protect the health and wellbeing of aged care workers, their families, co-workers and the residents.

COVID-safe festive season advice for aged care

The DHHS has released advice for residential aged care facilities to celebrate the season safely. Advice includes how to plan and host events and activities and facilitate safe visits from friends and family.

Read the DHHS Factsheet – COVIDsafe festive season in residential aged care facilities (17 December 2020) via <https://bit.ly/3hac5jk>

Fit testing of masks

The Healthcare Worker Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce reports that fit testing is underway across the sector. To expand local capacity, the Victorian Government has ordered 136 new fit testing machines. Many machines have already arrived from the USA.

Fit testing is part of the Victorian Respiratory Protection Program (RPP) which is mandatory for all health services. Each fit test takes between 45 and 90 minutes to complete and requires specialist equipment and an appropriately skilled person to conduct the fit test. See below for the fit testing program guidelines.

Health services should have undertaken a risk assessment to prioritise healthcare workers for fit testing based on their clinical area of work.

The taskforce is now meeting fortnightly. ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick is a member of the taskforce.

ANMF is advocating for all healthcare services to include of fit testing in their orientation programs for new staff.

Important Healthcare Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce documents

There are no active healthcare worker infections. The healthcare worker infection data dashboard can be viewed via <https://bit.ly/3iQT5q4> The Healthcare Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce (<https://bit.ly/343Wtle>) has published the following guidelines and information:

1. COVID-19 Best practice approaches for safe staff amenities for health services <https://bit.ly/3lhKIEZ>
2. Victoria's respiratory protection program <https://bit.ly/2G3yr84>
3. Victoria's respiratory protection program guidelines <https://bit.ly/2G35gSs>
4. Establishing a fit testing program guidelines <https://bit.ly/3aOa2Az>
5. Daily attestations: frequently asked questions <https://bit.ly/2RXVjbC>

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6. Protecting our healthcare workers action plan <https://bit.ly/3p99aer>

Important PPE guidance and infection prevention links

1. DHHS infection control guidance page <http://bit.ly/DHHSinfectioncontrol>
this hub includes links to many of the documents listed below
2. DHHS Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection prevention and control guideline (updated 26 October 2020) <https://bit.ly/3deTBLE>
information about conventional use of PPE, staff attestations, aerosol transmission, eye protection updated, PPE spotters introduced, zoning concept for healthcare, powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs), showering a patient, non-urgent patient transport, respiratory protection program and hierarchy of controls, cleaning and medical records/patient charts.
3. DHHS PPE guidance (**updated 14 December**) <https://bit.ly/DHHSppe>
includes definitions of tiers and when N95 respirator masks should be worn
4. DHHS COVID-19 – PPE and levels of protection (20 July) <https://bit.ly/2G7VCO7>
5. DHHS COVID-19 – a guide to the conventional use of PPE (**updated 11 December**) <https://bit.ly/2yBnmaa>
6. DHHS Personal protective equipment guidance for residential aged care (28 August) <https://bit.ly/3lbfLT3>
7. DHHS Extended P2/N95 respirator and eye protection use – preventing facial injuries during COVID-19 (9 October) <https://bit.ly/31qHjw4>
8. DHHS COVID-19 - Disposing of clinical waste <https://bit.ly/2REJF5b>
9. DHHS Personal protective equipment for the provision of mental health care (1 September) <https://bit.ly/2ALJgch>
10. DHHS PPE for community service providers for prevention of COVID-19 (**15 December**) <https://bit.ly/3hIsWt0>
11. DHHS Maternity and neonatal care during COVID-19 (16 October) <https://bit.ly/3aWCnmc>
12. DHHS Respiratory support for children during the COVID-19 emergency (updated 23 September) <https://bit.ly/3dcA2DL>
13. DHHS Assisting patients with hygiene care during coronavirus (COVID-19) – risk minimisation for staff (PDF) (1 October) <https://bit.ly/2H0hknW>
14. WorkSafe Victoria Managing coronavirus (COVID-19) risks: Healthcare and social assistance industry – Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) <https://bit.ly/3ddwqRT>

Do you have a personal protective equipment concern?

ANMF continues to advocate and raise and resolve members' issues at the PPE taskforce union consultation meetings. **Members with concerns about PPE should:**

1. **continue to 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**

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3. **contact ANMF via [anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance](https://www.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.**

Insurance policy for students on placement at a public health service

The Department of Health and Human Services has announced an insurance policy for nursing and midwifery students who contract COVID-19 as a result of their clinical placement at a public health service.

The government's insurer, VMIA Group Personal Accident insurance, will cover nursing and midwifery students from 12 October 2020 to 30 June 2021.

ANMF has welcomed the insurance as a first step but is calling on the government to match the WorkCover entitlements available to all employees. The new coverage includes:

- weekly benefits to cover lost income up to a maximum \$500 for six weeks
- 85% of the cost of non-Medicare medical expenses that are not covered by private health insurance up to \$10,000.

It does not include medical expenses that are subject to a Medicare rebate.

ANMF continues to advocate for students on clinical placements who are not employed by the health facility for access to WorkCover-style insurance protection in the event they test positive to COVID-19.

If you need advice on making a claim contact ANMF Member Assistance via <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

Don't bring it home: guide to minimise the risk of infection

A reminder that ANMF (Vic Branch) has developed a guide to assist you in relation to 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

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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.