

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update #21

**Healthcare worker COVID-19 infection data; measures to prevent further transmission;
WorkCover claims expedited; ANMF masks for members; and
nurses and midwives urged to provide NMBA feedback on recency of practice changes**

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 anmfvic.asn.au/covid-19. Please read the information on our website before submitting a question. Member Assistance is not taking phone inquiries as ANMF staff are working remotely. 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 20 July.

Latest COVID-19 statistics

Victorian statistics (**new dashboard**) via <https://bit.ly/3j5vJwC>

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

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

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

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

Additional ANMF support for members

To provide additional support to members with urgent issues during this time, an ANMF staff member has been available on Saturdays and Sundays, between 8.45 and 5pm. To reach the on-call weekend contact, call the ANMF office number on 9275 9333.

Healthcare worker COVID-19 incidence and source

On 25 August the Chief Medical Officer Professor Andrew Wilson, Chief Health Officer Professor Brett Sutton, Premier Daniel Andrews and Health Minister Jenny Mikakos provided a briefing at the daily Victorian Government media conference following a data review of the incidence of COVID-19 among healthcare workers and the source of infection.

As of 23 August 2020, 2,692 cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) have been diagnosed in healthcare workers (HCWs). Of the 2,692 cases, 2,255 from 1 July have been investigated as at 23 August. Investigations are ongoing

ANMF understands that of the health care workers who have tested positive, 117 were hospitalised, 12 were in ICU and there was one death, in wave one, reported of a disability nurse.

The data review revealed that:

Wave one

1. **In wave one** (until 30 June), 22 per cent of healthcare workers who contracted coronavirus (COVID-19) acquired it at work.

Wave two: analysis of 2,255 cases

2. **In wave two** (from 1 July) at least 69 per cent of all healthcare worker cases have been or were likely to have been workplace acquired, with 21 per cent remaining under investigation.
3. The majority of healthcare worker infections, 955 or **42 per cent**, occurred in private aged care.
4. Of the aged care infections 27 per cent were nurses (including those who assisted when a number of private aged care facilities fell over), 66 per cent were aged care and disability workers.

At this stage 'aged care worker' is not broken into other categories such as personal care worker, admin, cleaning and catering staff.

5. In hospital settings there were 729 healthcare worker infections or **32 per cent** of the total investigated cases. Of these 73 percent were nurses, 11 percent were doctors and 16 per cent are deemed 'others'.
6. From 1 July, 303 other healthcare workers – including midwives – contracted COVID-19. Sixty-five per cent of these cases have been investigated, of those 69 per cent were acquired at work. The ANMF has requested a further breakdown of the data specifically for midwives.
7. GP clinics account for **1.5 per cent** of healthcare worker cases and 'other' healthcare settings account for **24.5 per cent**.
8. Data is not yet available about transmission, for example, staff to staff member or patient to staff member.
9. Leading causes included cases being 'cohorted' in the same clinical space, contact between health workers in areas like tea and break rooms, gaps in putting on and taking off PPE, movement of staff between facilities and older ventilation systems being less effective at ensuring good air flow.

Source: 'Protecting our healthcare workers', Department of Health and Human Services

Read the DHHS data report 'Protecting our healthcare workers': <https://bit.ly/3gubQ0D>

Read the Premier's media release 'Protecting our healthcare heroes': <https://bit.ly/3leSXCB>

Read the ANMF (Vic Branch) media release: <https://bit.ly/3hAwsFL>

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What is being done to prevent healthcare worker infections?

The ANMF (Vic Branch) has been strongly advocating on behalf of members including calling for greater transparency about how healthcare workers are contracting COVID-19.

The critical work which will advise whether the transmission was staff to staff member or patient to staff member is yet to be finalised but will be a further piece of work that can inform the work of the taskforce and what needs to happen going forward.

The DHHS data review provides potent information to prevent further transmission among healthcare and aged care workers. Importantly, the department has not waited until the finalisation of this data to act, many measures have already been implemented.

The Victorian Government has established a Healthcare Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce to gather and review data on healthcare worker infections and provide guidance on best practice infection control practices within health and aged care settings. This group has a specific focus on improving the care for and wellbeing of healthcare and aged care workers. ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick is on this taskforce.

ANMF will also continue to raise members' issues with Health Minister Jenny Mikakos and the Department of Health and Human Services each week and via the Safer Care PPE Taskforce union committee each week. These meetings provide ANMF with an opportunity to receive in-depth information, raise members issues directly with the Minister and senior DHHS officials and focus on resolutions for members.

The Victorian Government has undertaken widespread testing including at outbreak sites, furloughing staff when there is an outbreak and providing hotel accommodation for hospital and aged care workers who can't self-isolate or quarantine at home – protecting them and those they live with.

Government funding is available to reduce the movement of aged care workers across sites. Outbreak management squads are working closely with aged care settings where an outbreak has occurred.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Broadening use of N95 masks

A dedicated Personal Protective Equipment Taskforce, headed up by Prof Andrew Wilson, was established early in the pandemic to provide guidelines on the appropriate level and use of PPE. ANMF (Vic Branch) Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator Kathy Chrisfield is on the healthcare union committee which feeds into the taskforce which broadened the use of N95 masks on 1 August to include emergency departments, intensive care units, COVID-19 wards, aged care facilities and any other setting where COVID-19 patients are cohorted.

Health services are also providing additional training support on infection control and incident management responses to hospital and aged care providers in their catchments.

ANMF has previously advised members about the revised DHHS PPE guidelines which apply to all healthcare workers including nurses and personal care workers in private aged care since 1 August. The key advice for all healthcare workers is available via <https://bit.ly/3g5d96m>

ANMF reminds members that **WorkSafe Victoria advises irrespective of fit testing, fit checking should be undertaken every time someone puts a respirator on.** If the appropriate fit is not achieved, the respirator is not providing adequate protection. In these circumstances someone who can achieve an appropriate fit should

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undertake the procedure or delay the procedure until an appropriate fit can be achieved. Fit testing is already happening at a number of health services.

Aged care settings

Residential Aged Care Support Officers are being deployed to aged care settings to provide support to staff in those aged care facilities to improve infection control. That will include the appropriate supply, use and application of PPE.

In addition to the provision of PPE, staff are also being allocated dedicated safe spaces to dress and remove their PPE. If this is not happening in your workplace, please contact ANMF Member Assistance via the online form:

<https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

Hospital settings

Each health service will now be required to implement repeated surveillance testing of staff working on coronavirus (COVID-19) wards to further guard against infection.

PPE 'spotters' will be deployed in hospital settings to ensure accurate donning and doffing of PPE for healthcare workers entering and leaving COVID-19 environments.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will also undertake a 'fit testing' trial of PPE at Northern Health. While ANMF strongly supports the fit testing trial and the gathering of evidence to prevent COVID-19 transmission among healthcare workers, we have also called for a consistent approach to infection control and use of PPE across all health and aged care sites, consistent and appropriate PPE sizes, and mandatory fit testing of N95 masks across health and aged care services.

The Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority is undertaking a COVID Aerosol Hot Spot Analysis Study to identify potential 'hot spots' in clinical spaces caused by exhaled aerosols coming to rest on surfaces.

IMPROVING COVIDSAFE WORKPLACES

Health services, residential aged care facilities, residential disability facilities and GP clinics will be responsible for incorporating and recording a verbal attestation, or confirmation, of symptom status into their daily worker health checks.

To limit infection among healthcare workers, safe and clean amenities (bathrooms and break rooms) must be provided at every health workplace across the state.

If this is not happening in your workplace, please contact ANMF Member Assistance via the online form:

<https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

Aged care settings

The Department of Health and Human Services will work with the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC) and the Commonwealth Government to propose a program of self-assessment of staff amenities in every aged care facility with immediate implementation of alternative arrangements where existing facilities do not meet minimum standards.

It is also proposed that VACRC will co-ordinate industry wide auditing of COVIDSafe plans for the aged care sector.

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Hospital settings

Every health service in Victoria will be required to self-assess their amenities to ensure they meet minimum standards for physical distancing, cleanliness and infection control. Where amenities do not meet these standards, such as not being large enough to accommodate staff while respecting distancing requirements, alternative arrangements including temporary facilities must be immediately implemented. These arrangements will be made in consultation with unions including the ANMF.

Safer Care Victoria will work with health services to undertake detailed spot audits of the implementation of COVIDSafe plans to assess for quality and safety, including the implementation of infection prevention and control actions. These plans are being provided to ANMF and our OH&S team are reviewing them.

SHARING OF DATA

The Department of Health and Human Services will use the data to share learnings from outbreaks. Online forums will be established to allow healthcare workers to access updated information and advice, and to ask questions relevant to their setting and circumstances.

Hospital settings

The Healthcare Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce and Safer Care Victoria will collect contact tracing data from hospitals facing active outbreaks to enable detailed analysis of infection trends to inform early action and share this data.

WorkCover claims

We now have the Department of Health and Human Services data confirming that since 1 July, most healthcare workers – particularly nurses and personal care workers – who have contracted COVID-19, acquired it at work.

The Victorian Government announced on 25 August that healthcare workers' WorkCover claims are being fast-tracked, with all claims being assessed within an average of 48 hours. ANMF is confirming with the government that personal care workers' WorkCover claims are also being fast-tracked.

ANMF recommends any member who contracts COVID-19 to make a WorkCover claim. Any special paid leave provided by your employer does not impact a WorkCover claim. ANMF is not aware of WorkCover rejecting any healthcare worker's claim.

If you've contracted COVID-19 at work, contact ANMF Member Assistance via <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance> for advice and referral to Gordon Legal where necessary to assist with your claim.

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 (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.**

Please see our 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' poster at the end of this newsflash.

ANMF-branded reusable face masks

As our acknowledgement of the work you do, members have started receiving an ANMF-branded reusable face mask **to wear outside work**. Please note – nurses, midwives and personal care workers should **only wear employer-provided PPE at work**.

Due to the huge volume of masks to manufacture and mail, ensuring that each of our 91,000 members receives one, it will take some time. To date 30,000 masks have been sent to member's homes, with the remaining 61,000 over the next several weeks.

These reusable masks:

- comply with DHHS recommendations for three layers (outer layer: polyester/cotton, middle layer: polyester mesh and inner layer: 100% cotton)
- can be machine washed (warm) and tumble dried (low heat) if you don't have time to handwash or air dry
- are made in Melbourne by 100% unionised workers.

Feel free to share a selfie wearing your mask on your social media accounts. Just tag @anmfvic in your post.

Tell NMBA what you think about nurse and midwife recency of practice changes - 31 August feedback deadline

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia is consulting on proposed changes to the existing *Registration Standard: Recency of practice*. This Standard outlines the requirements nurses and midwives must meet to remain registered for practice. The current Standard requires nurses and midwives to undertake 450 hours of practice over 5 years. The nurse or midwife determines how these hours are completed over the five-year period. It is proposed that:

To meet the requirements of this registration standard for recency of practice you must be able to demonstrate an adequate connection with the profession and complete a minimum of:

- a) 300 hours of practice in the previous two years, or*
- b) 450 hours of practice in the previous three years, or*
- c) 750 hours of practice in the previous five years*

If you are a recent graduate you must complete a minimum of 300 hours of practice within two years of completing your program of study that lead to registration as a nurse or midwife.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is **strongly opposed** to this proposed change which increases the hours currently required from **450 hours or 3 months** in 5 years to **750 hours or 5 months** in 5 years.

This is an increase of **300 hours** and a **significant reduction** in the time available to complete these proposed additional hours.

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The ANMF considers the proposed changes are unwarranted and lack any supporting evidence. The changes will not provide, as the NMBA has purported, more 'flexibility'. Instead, the proposal would reduce flexibility for nurses and midwives (especially those returning to the workforce after maternity leave), create unnecessary barriers to participation of women in the workforce and therefore work against ensuring a sustainable nursing and midwifery workforce.

We encourage you to contribute to this NMBA consultation by providing your feedback to the survey at <https://bit.ly/2FYVIYs> by **31 August 2020**. Please let the NMBA know how this will affect you and your nursing and midwifery colleagues, both personally and professionally.

Read the full Federal ANMF communique with attached consultation paper and proposed revised Standard and guidelines via <https://bit.ly/2QoTuU9>

No concern too small or too big: call NMHPV before you feel overwhelmed

Did you know Victorian nurses, midwives, students of nursing and midwifery and aged care personal care workers have access to the independent, free and confidential mental health support, counselling and referral services?

The Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria is run by nurses and provides tailored support for the nursing, midwifery and personal carer workforce in public and private facilities.

Since May the Andrews Government has provided NMHPV an additional \$600,000 so the service can respond to the increased need for its services during the pandemic.

Watch NMHPV Chief Executive Officer Glenn Taylor talk about how they can support you anmfvic.asn.au/nmhpv

To contact NMHPV call 9415 7551 or email admin@nmhp.org.au

Find out more www.nmhp.org.au

National nursing, midwifery and personal care worker COVID-19 survey

The ANMF, in all states and territories, has partnered with the Rosemary Bryant AO Research Centre at the University of South Australia to research the effects the Australian outbreak of COVID-19 has had on the nursing, midwifery, and personal care workforce.

Your experience will assist the ANMF to advocate for more improvements nationally that will lead to better workforce wellbeing, preparation, job satisfaction and quality of care.

The national 20-minute survey is open to nurses, midwives and personal care workers in all states and territories.

All members are encouraged to participate in the survey by 31 October. Please share the link with your colleagues.

Take the survey now is.gd/covidandwork

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.