

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update #24

New Health Minister; healthcare worker infection prevention update; NMHPV ‘I’m only human’ campaign encourages nurses, midwives and carers to seek support; AHPRA to register 30,000 graduates; plan to resume elective surgery

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 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 18 September.

Latest COVID-19 statistics

View the Healthcare Worker COVID-19 data dashboard (new – updated every Tuesday) <https://bit.ly/3jQT5q4>

View the Victorian COVID-19 data 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>

Victorian voices needed in national COVID-19 survey

Thank you to all of the members who responded to our COVID-19 survey email. We still need more participants because **it is important our national survey hears from as many Victorian nurses, midwives, carers and nursing and midwifery students as possible.**

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.

The survey closes 31 October. Take the 20-minute survey now is.gd/covidandwork

You care for your patients and residents. Now let NMHPV care for you.

Many members are telling us that they're feeling anxious, fatigued and stressed after months of working and living within the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions.

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.

You can find more information and ideas on the NMHPV health and wellbeing toolkit page <https://bit.ly/2S6A1Z7>

The NMHPV is an independent service providing free and confidential counselling and support to Victorian nurses, midwives, nursing and midwifery students and aged care personal care workers.

Nurses and midwives can be reluctant to seek support, fearing being seen as unprofessional or feeling they should be able to cope. The NMHPV's 'I'm only human' campaign is aimed at encouraging nurses, midwives, and residential aged care personal care workers, to seek support before you hit crisis point from the demands of working within a one-in-100 years pandemic.

The NMHPV can provide anything from a caring and compassionate listening ear to helping you develop a care plan to get your health back on track. They are also a safe space to talk about family violence, and alcohol and substance use, and can refer you to specialist services if necessary.

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

Find out more www.nmhp.org.au

ANMF welcomes new Health Minister Martin Foley

On Saturday 28 September Minister for Health and Ambulance Services Jenny Mikakos resigned from Victorian Parliament. ANMF issued a media statement respecting Ms Mikakos' decision and acknowledging her dedication over many years and her passion for her portfolios. She was a champion for nurse/midwife patient ratios and maternal and child health nursing in particular. Her legacy will have enduring benefits for our professions and the Victorian community.

Mental Health Minister Martin Foley has been appointed to the portfolios of health and ambulance services. ANMF has worked well with Minister Foley in his portfolio areas since the Andrews Government was elected in 2014 and we look forward to working with him to improve the health system during the pandemic and beyond.

Read the full ANMF media statement <https://bit.ly/3cz1I6v>

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Update: healthcare worker infection prevention and wellbeing taskforce

The healthcare worker infection data dashboard (<https://bit.ly/3iQT5q4>) is updated every Tuesday. Infections are coming down with 49 new healthcare worker cases as at 22 September. This was 50 per cent less than the week before. New cases included 26 aged care and disability workers (this category is not broken down), 21 nurses, one other healthcare worker and one pharmacist. This information is available via <https://bit.ly/3iQT5q4>

The Healthcare Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce (<https://bit.ly/343Wtle>) is meeting weekly and is expected to publish a regular update. The latest update provides information about:

1. The release of the Victorian Respiratory Protection Program on 19 September to guide when, how and where respiratory protection is needed. The program will assist health services to implement structured interventions and prevention strategies (such as fit testing) to minimise the risk of exposure to respiratory hazards such as COVID-19.

The mandatory program is expected to be established in every Victorian public health service by 31 October. This initiative has been developed in conjunction with the sector, including technical input and expertise from healthcare workers, occupational hygienists, occupational health and safety specialists, infection control practitioners and health service executives.

Read Victoria's respiratory protection program <https://bit.ly/2G3yr84>

Read Victoria's respiratory protection program guidelines <https://bit.ly/2G35gSs>

2. The Chief Medical Officer has issued advice to health services about best practices to keep staff amenities, such as bathrooms and break rooms, safe and clean.
3. The development of frequently asked questions to support the implementation of verbal or written healthcare worker attestations that they are symptom-free prior to starting a shift.
Read DHHS guidance via <https://bit.ly/2RXVjbc>
4. The development of further guidance relating to the engagement of personal protective equipment spotters. The intention is to establish consistent and best practice infection prevention measures across the system.
5. Research into transmission risk in COVID-19 wards. As part of the second action of the protecting healthcare workers action plan to support infection prevention control, the taskforce reviewed initial research into interventions hospitals implemented to minimise risk of healthcare workers acquiring COVID-19. These included:
 - supplying PPE and establishing facilities for donning and doffing PPE
 - reducing the number of patients in COVID-19 wards
 - physically separating patients with COVID-19 from those without COVID-19
 - treating patients with COVID-19 in newer building facilities
 - placing patients who are more infectious in better ventilated areas.

Further review of the effectiveness of each of these interventions will inform a set of minimum standards for:

- the number of patients in COVID-19 wards
- cleaning procedures for COVID-19 wards

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- rostering of staff working in COVID-19 wards
- best practice approaches to the use of PPE.

The minimum standards will be developed by the department with input from the taskforce, before being released to health services.

6. The Department of Health and Human Services is working with the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre and the Aged Care Quality Commission to audit COVIDSafe plans across the aged care sector.
7. Australian-made Detmold respirators supplies are now rolling out. Studies have shown this respirator meets the standard for level 3 fluid resistance. Fit testing in South Australia has shown that 75 per cent of staff can achieve a satisfactory fit with the Detmold respirator.

As at Friday 18 September the Victorian Government had more than 74 million surgical masks and 3,2 million N95 masks.

The information above is taken from the 'Healthcare worker update' – 17 September. Read the full update via <https://bit.ly/331tYM0>

With fit testing being rolled out as part of respiratory protection programs, ANMF is reminding health services they need to consult with their Health and Safety Reps to ensure the program is about infection control and occupational health and safety.

As previously reported to members the analysis of 2600 healthcare worker infections at work in the second wave found the 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* <https://bit.ly/3gubQ0D>

ANMF continues to recommend members follow the WorkSafe advice to fit check your N95 respirator mask (<https://bit.ly/3ddwqRT>). 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 undertake the procedure or delay the procedure until an appropriate fit can be achieved.

How to put on a P2/N95 respirator mask (donning)

1. Rest the nose bridge on top of the nose and place the bottom panel or bottom of cup securely under chin.
2. The straps are secured at the back of the middle of the head and neck.
3. Position and mould nose piece (where available) around nose using fingertips of both hands

Perform the fit check

1. place one or both hands completely over the middle panel or cup
2. inhale and exhale sharply
3. check for air leaks around the nose
4. adjust respirator until no leaks can be felt.

Note: If tight fitting seal cannot be achieved with one brand of respirator, then it might be achieved with a different shaped N95/P2 respirator. If a seal cannot be achieved, then the task should not be performed.

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AHPRA preparing to register 30,000 new graduate nurses and midwives

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has written to ANMF (Vic Branch) detailing its plans to register about 30,000 graduate nurses and midwives. (Read the letter via <https://bit.ly/2ZPpu8W>)

To ensure a smooth process, this year's graduates are encouraged to apply for registration within three months of their expected graduation date. This information has been provided to all education institutions.

AHPRA is aiming to register graduates within two weeks of receiving their graduate results. AHPRA anticipates receiving about 30,000 registration applications.

To help graduates better understand the registration process AHPRA has developed a short video which can be viewed via <https://bit.ly/3mz2IMz>

A more detailed newsflash has been sent to our final year student members (see <https://bit.ly/341Oj32>).

Student clinical placement guidance

The Department of Health and Human Services has updated its student clinical placement guidance (<https://bit.ly/3hIvAyf> 15 September). The guidance provides specific advice for education providers, students, Victorian public health services and aged care providers on student clinical placements scheduled during the current first step restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne and second step in regional Victoria.

ANMF is assisting final year students concerned about securing clinical placements required to graduate on time. If you are experiencing an issue seek ANMF advice using the below link, after you have contacted your education provider to ascertain if they have accessed clinical placement opportunities for you on the data system known as 'Place Right'. <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/covid19student>

Contracting COVID-19 on clinical placement

Currently, the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act doesn't provide for students on placement, although if you are a student and employed you will be covered by WorkCover.

To rectify this, ANMF is working with WorkSafe Victoria to review workers compensation provisions applying to students in these circumstances. In order to do this, ANMF needs student members to provide detailed examples of this occurring.

If you have potentially contracted COVID-19 during your student placement, inform Member Assistance (anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance). Your information will remain confidential and will be de-identified.

It is critical that we know how many students have been affected and where transmission occurred, so we can also ensure that the facility has implemented appropriate risk controls to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

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Restrictions ease as Metro Melbourne moves to second step

On 27 September, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced metropolitan Melbourne would move to the second step of the plan to ease restrictions as at 11.59pm.

The curfew was lifted as of 5am, 28 September and almost 130,000 additional workers in selected industries will return to the workplace, groups of five from two households can meet outdoors and all primary school children will return to face-to-face learning in term four.

Read the Premier's statement <https://bit.ly/342DjT0>

Read a table of all the new restrictions <https://bit.ly/3cEmjpK>

Read the four-stage plan for metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria <https://bit.ly/3bFCQcS>

Elective surgery increase plan

A staged resumption of elective surgery began on Thursday 17 September in Victoria's regional public and private hospitals and is expected to resume in metropolitan Melbourne from the end of the month.

Regional Victoria moved to stage two of the four-stage plan at 11.59pm on Wednesday 16 September. The government plans to increase to 85 per cent of usual activity from 28 September.

Metropolitan Melbourne hospitals will increase up to 75 per cent of usual activity from 28 September and 85 per cent of activity when they move to the third step of the roadmap (subject to trigger points and public health advice).

All Victorian hospitals will move to 100 per cent of usual activity when the state moves to the last step to COVID normal (subject to trigger points and public health advice).

It is expected about 18,750 additional surgeries will take place in private and public hospitals in October and 10,500 surgeries in November. An elective surgery blitz will take place as soon as it is safe to do so to catch up on the delayed surgeries.

Read the Victorian Government media release <https://bit.ly/3hKVOA2>

Read the four-stage plan for metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria <https://bit.ly/3bFCQcS>

Important PPE guidance and infection control links

1. DHHS PPE guidance webpage <https://bit.ly/DHHSppe> includes definitions of tiers and when N95 respirator masks should be worn
2. COVID-19 – PPE and levels of protection (20 July) <https://bit.ly/2G7VCO7>
3. DHHS COVID-19 – a guide to the conventional use of PPE (updated 27 August) <https://bit.ly/2yBnmaa>
4. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Infection Prevention and Control guideline (10 September) <https://bit.ly/3deTBLE>
5. DHHS COVID-19 - Disposing of clinical waste <https://bit.ly/2REJF5b>
6. Personal Protective Equipment for the provision of mental health care (1 September) <https://bit.ly/2ALJgch>
7. PPE for community service providers for prevention of COVID-19 (4 September) <https://bit.ly/3hIsWt0>
8. Maternity and neonatal care during COVID-19 (8 September) <https://bit.ly/3aWCnmc>

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9. Respiratory support for children during the COVID-19 emergency (updated 23 September) <https://bit.ly/3dcA2DL>
10. WorkSafe Victoria Managing coronavirus (COVID-19) risks: Healthcare and social assistance industry – Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) <https://bit.ly/3ddwgRT>

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**
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.

COVID-19 call out: be part of the nursing and midwifery exhibition

Victorian nurses and midwives are being asked to share their 'caring under COVID-19' experience and photographs as part of an exhibition to mark the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife.

The exhibition to be held at Her Place museum in East Melbourne will launch in early 2021. It is also expected to travel to regional Victoria.

Funded by the Victorian Government, the exhibition will be hosted in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services and Safer Care Victoria and is supported by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch). To participate, go to <https://bit.ly/caringundercovid>

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

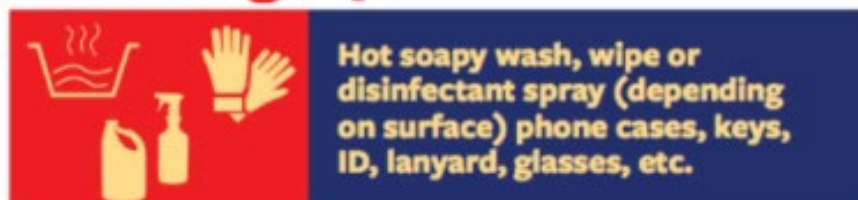


Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection.

-  **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



Consider changing in and out of your uniform/scrubs at work.