

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

### **Update #23**

**New healthcare worker data dashboard; healthcare workers must feel free to speak up about reducing risk; ignore misleading WorkCover advice; ANMF supports cautious re-opening plan**

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](https://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](https://bit.ly/2UhDSU2)) was last updated 20 July.

### **Latest COVID-19 statistics**

View the Healthcare Worker COVID-19 data dashboard (**new**) <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>

### **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.

## **No concern too small or too big: support is available**

Our recent member survey showed that some of you are unaware that the Nursing & Midwifery Health Program Victoria is available to provide support to you during this difficult time.

The independent service is free and confidential and available for all Victorian nurses, midwives, nursing and midwifery students and aged care personal care workers.

We know from the survey that many of you are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic with anxiety, stress and isolation. The NMHPV can provide a listening ear, work with you on a care plan and refer you to specialist services if necessary.

Watch NMHPV Chief Executive Officer Glenn Taylor talk about how they can support you [anmfvic.asn.au/nmhpv](https://anmfvic.asn.au/nmhpv)

**To contact NMHPV call 9415 7551** or email [admin@nmhp.org.au](mailto:admin@nmhp.org.au)

Find out more [www.nmhp.org.au](https://www.nmhp.org.au)

## **Aged care single-site employment extended – metro Melbourne and Mitchell Shire**

In late July the Commonwealth Government began funding residential aged care providers in metro Melbourne and Mitchell Shire to support employees, working at more than one residential aged care site, to limit their employment to only one residential aged care site.

The changes were originally in place for eight weeks from 27 July until 25 September. This has been extended to 26 October and may be further extended if required pending advice from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments.

All aged care members have been sent a more detailed newsflash which can be read via <https://bit.ly/35mEezE>

## **Protecting healthcare workers**

The Healthcare Worker Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce continues to meet weekly to provide advice on strategies and processes to reduce work-acquired infections and improve healthcare worker wellbeing. ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick is a member of the taskforce.

Healthcare worker infections have significantly reduced since the August peak. Between 27 August to 2 September there were 154 new healthcare worker cases. This included 83 aged care or disability workers (a breakdown is not provided) 49 nurses and one midwife.

### **Data transparency – new healthcare worker data dashboard**

Information about healthcare worker infections will be published weekly on a data dashboard to improve transparency and communication. View the dashboard via <https://bit.ly/3jQT5q4>

### **Healthcare workers must feel free to speak up**

The taskforce is also promoting the need for organisations to support their healthcare workers to feel free to speak up if they see opportunities to reduce risk, such as changing practices.

### **Daily attestation**

As of 4 September, healthcare workers, including students on clinical placement, are now required to confirm they are symptom free prior to starting a shift. This applies to public health services, private hospitals including private

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day procedure centres and residential aged care. Providers can establish a verbal or written attestation process. This measure was first reported in COVID-19 newsflash dated 27 August (via <https://bit.ly/3iloXCQ> )

### **Staff amenity audit**

Health services have been asked to assess staff amenities against physical distancing standards of one person per four square metres; and at least 1.5 metres space between individuals in staff spaces to reduce person-to-person contact. Amenities include meal areas, tea rooms and break rooms, rest areas and bathrooms.

The self-assessment must be completed by 18 September. If existing spaces do not comply, health services have been asked to identify solutions. The DHHS and Building Standards Authority will provide support to implement alternatives.

### **Respiratory protection program**

The taskforce has endorsed the development of a statewide Respiratory Protection Program (RPP) to minimise the risk of infection from airborne infectious disease. The RPP will include a range of protections including:

- the appointment of a program administrator in each setting
- selection of respiratory protections based on risk
- training in requirements and use including fit checking
- issuing Respiratory Protection Equipment (RPE)
- fit-testing
- record keeping and audit and evaluation of the RPP.

Over the coming weeks, taskforce members together with Worksafe Victoria will design a statewide RPP which will be implemented across Victorian healthcare facilities.

### **Evidence based policy**

A COVID-19 Aerosol Hot Spot Analysis has been commissioned by the Victorian Health and Human Service Building Authority to identify potential 'hot spots' in clinical spaces. This study looks at aerosol behaviour and tracks small particles in the air as they are carried in the hospital airstreams determining when and where they hit surfaces and stick to them, creating hot spots. Once completed, guidance will be issued to health services to improve their understanding of hot spots and enhance cleaning and infection control processes.

The information above is from the Healthcare Worker Infection Prevention and Wellbeing Taskforce circular (3 September) <https://bit.ly/3h742SL>

### **Ignore misleading WorkCover advice**

ANMF advises members that a WorkSafe Reference Number provides **NO** protection in relation to a WorkCover claim.

A number of members have contacted ANMF after being advised that they do not need to lodge a WorkCover claim yet, because their case has been notified to WorkSafe, and they have a 'reference number' which will protect them. This is factually incorrect. The reference number applies only to the employer's obligation to notify WorkSafe if employees/ contractors test positive to COVID-19 and have been on site. The reference number is entirely unrelated to WorkCover claims, and provides no protection nor assurance that if needed, a WorkCover claim will be activated.

To access WorkCover entitlements, members are required to submit a WorkCover claim form, with a Certificate of Capacity completed by a doctor (in the first instance). If the claim is accepted, members will usually have their personal leave reimbursed and medical and like expenses covered for the life of the injury or illness.

ANMF understands that all claims made by healthcare workers, who have contracted COVID-19, have been accepted by the WorkCover insurer.

We also believe that some employers may be suggesting that workers are 'better off' not claiming under WorkCover and using their personal leave or some other form of leave whilst they are ill with COVID-19. This is also misleading.

Under Workcover an employee who is unable to work or has a limited capacity to work will receive weekly payments which are calculated at 95% of the employee's Pre-injury/ Illness Average Weekly earnings (PIAWE) for the first 13 weeks of payments. Given that the average weekly earnings used include the base rate of pay, penalty rates and shift allowances, and that personal leave is only calculated at the base rate of pay, there is often very little difference between PIAWE weekly payments and personal leave payments.

An accepted WorkCover claim will provide members with reassurance that any aggravation or recurrence of health-related issues associated with COVID-19, will also be covered in the future by reopening the original claim or referencing it in a new claim.

Given the variability of recovery times and ongoing health outcomes of people who have contracted COVID-19 infection are largely unknown, ANMF **strongly encourages all members** who contract COVID-19 at work (or suspect that this has occurred) to submit WorkCover claims. We will actively support and advise members throughout the WorkCover process.

**It may be an offence for an employer to actively discourage or intimidate a worker into not making a WorkCover claim** under the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013. Please notify ANMF if this has occurred at your workplace.

For support with a claim or if you are being discouraged not to make a claim contact Member Assistance via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

## **ANMF supports cautious re-opening plan to protect community and healthcare workers**

On Sunday 6 September, Premier Daniel Andrews announced the government's staged plan to re-open Victoria.

The four-stage plan for metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire and the rest of regional Victoria is available via <https://bit.ly/3bFCQcS>

While we share the same lock-down frustrations as all Victorians, ANMF supports the Andrews Government's and Chief Health Officer's cautious plan to re-open in a way that will protect the community and healthcare workers.

Nurses, personal care workers and midwives have felt the brutal brunt of Victoria's COVID-19 second wave. The outbreak has severely tested our health and aged care systems and we must do everything possible to avoid that relentless pressure again because it is unsustainable. Read the ANMF media release via <https://bit.ly/3bCyGck>

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## Summary of Steps towards COVID Normal

From 11:59pm Sunday 13 September, some restrictions will be eased across Victoria. Regional Victoria and Melbourne Metro each have their own roadmaps, relating to how many active cases are currently in the community.

### First Step

Regional Victoria

First step only applies to Metro Melbourne.

Metro Melbourne (11:59pm 13 September)

Expanded social interaction.

### Second Step

Regional Victoria (11:59pm 13 September)

Social bubbles, visitors and staged return of education.

Metro Melbourne (28 September subject to trigger points and public health advice)

Social bubbles, phased return of some workforces and education.

### Third Step

Regional Victoria (subject to trigger points and public health advice)

Increased reopening for sport, recreation, ceremonies and special occasions.

Metro Melbourne (26 October subject to trigger points and public health advice)

Major industries return, increased reopening for education, sport, recreation, ceremonies and special occasions.

### Last Step

Statewide (23 November subject to trigger points and public health advice)

Increased numbers for gatherings and hospitality.

### COVID Normal

Statewide (subject to trigger points and public health advice)

No restrictions for gatherings, visitors, hospitality or sport.

## 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 (8 August) <https://bit.ly/3deTBLE>
5. Personal Protective Equipment for the provision of mental health care (1 September) <https://bit.ly/2ALJgch>
6. PPE for community service providers for prevention of COVID-19 (4 September) <https://bit.ly/3hIsWt0>

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7. Maternity and neonatal care during COVID-19 (8 September) <https://bit.ly/3aWCnmc>
8. Respiratory support for children during the COVID-19 emergency (updated 27 May) <https://bit.ly/3dcA2DL>
9. 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](http://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.

## Frontline workers concert album member offer

The creators of the ANZAC Day *Music from the Homefront* concert for the fight against COVID-19 are offering the album to ANMF members as a digital download for \$4.99.

This unique compilation of iconic songs and classic covers was recorded and broadcast for the ANZAC Day virtual concert event to honour the men and women of Australia's armed services together with frontline workers in health and essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

100% of profits from *Music From The Home Front* will go to Support Act - Australia's only charity delivering crisis relief services to artists, crew and music workers.

Please note: Mobile devices are generally not able to open redeemed files. Please use a desktop computer. Simply download, unzip and play, or add to your music player.

To access the ANMF member offer go to <http://fwd.rocks/ANMF>

## 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>

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## 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](https://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](https://bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH)

**Don't bring it home!**

### 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

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.**

**ANMF** Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation  
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