



## Position statement: Nurses, midwives and carers working permanent night shift

### 1. Context

Some nurses, midwives and carers elect to work permanent night shift. The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports this choice while noting that permanent night shift may also have adverse health effects.

### 2. Purpose

This position statement outlines the basic provisions that employers should have in place to ensure nurses, midwives and carers who work permanent night shift can access equivalent protections, support, amenities, and learning opportunities to their day shift colleagues.

### 3. Key definitions

**Permanent night shift worker:** a nurse, midwife or carer who, *on an ongoing basis*, is:

- contracted to work shifts exclusively or almost exclusively on night duty, or
- engaged on a demonstrable pattern of regular and systematic night shifts.

### 4. Branch position

It is the position of the ANMF (Vic Branch) that:

- 4.1 All nurses, midwives and carers should be supported to work the shifts that best suit their personal circumstances, while also having regard to the reasonable requirements of the health service.
- 4.2 Some nurses, midwives and carers elect to work permanent night shift, and we support this choice.
- 4.3 However, we also note that night-shift workers can experience sleep deprivation or sleep 'debt' over successive night shifts, and this can lead to fatigue and sleep-related performance issues.
- 4.4 Employers should therefore take a risk management approach to work related fatigue and ensure that:
  - night shifts are no longer than 10 hours, except for those nurses, midwives and carers who have elected to participate in a 12-hour roster
  - they conduct appropriate risk assessments and identify fatigue-related hazards
  - they implement control measures to eliminate or minimise any risks
  - they consult with health and safety representatives (HSRs) and employees.
- 4.5 Management must also ensure that all nurses, midwives and carers working night shift have equivalent access to day staff to facilities and amenities, including the following:
  - equipment to store and heat food, such as a microwave, fridge and toaster

- appropriate and secure staff-only rest facilities
  - working conditions that comply with legislated occupational health and safety requirements, including lifting equipment, security, and suitable lighting
  - adequate professional support and mentors
  - adequate human resources support.
- 4.6 Management must also ensure that all nurses, midwives and carers working night shift have equivalent access to day staff to education and professional development opportunities, systems, regulatory updates, and orientations; and that these opportunities are generally provided during their normal rostered working hours
- 4.7 Services may sometimes require nurses, midwives and carers working permanent night shift to work a period on day shift to participate in specific education, training, professional development, orientations, or regulatory / systems updates.
- 4.8 When this is the case, the period of day shift should not exceed four weeks in any given year, unless by mutual agreement.
- 4.9 Any period on day shift should be:
- part of a planned and agreed professional development plan that has been designed and agreed between the staff member and their manager, with input from the relevant nurse/midwife educators as required
  - at a time that is acceptable to the staff member and agreed by their manager, for example immediately before or after annual leave
  - planned and rostered well in advance
  - without loss of pay or allowances, including night shift penalties.
- 4.10 When services require permanent night staff to spend time on day shift, they must also support the staff member to make adequate arrangements for the following:
- childcare/family/carer commitments
  - health issues
  - travel arrangements
  - car parking
  - study leave
  - other employment and social responsibilities.

## 5. Related documents and references

[ANMF \(Vic Branch\) 12-hour roster agreements](#)

[ANMF \(Vic Branch\) Fatigue prevention policy](#)

[WorkSafe Victoria 2020, A guide for employers: work related fatigue](#)