ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

12 hour work roster agreements

It is the view of Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) that the most effective roster configuration is 8 hour day shift, 8 hour evening shift and 10 hour night shift.

A growing trend especially in recent years has been the introduction of a 12-hour work roster replacing the traditional 8-hour work schedule. The twelve (12) hour rostering schedule is typically arranged as a compressed work week, which includes an individual working 2 or 3 days in a row with 2 or 3 days off in a row. One of the main concerns with implementing a 12-hour roster is the effect it has upon employee’s levels of fatigue which could then lead to health or safety hazards, as well as reduce productivity, and increase turnover and absenteeism. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) [ANMF (Vic Branch)] has taken into account all relevant research and used the ACTU Code of Conduct for 12 hour shifts in the initial development of this policy.

12 hour shifts should only be implemented in high dependency areas and on a voluntary basis, following nurse (employee) requests. Guidelines for the trialling of 12 hour shifts have been developed by ANMF (Vic Branch). All trials must be via approved, agreed and signed 12 hour roster trial agreement between the employer and the ANMF (Vic Branch) and include an appropriate agreed evaluation process.

Any roster configuration must provide both employees and the employer with a number of assurances including:

(a) Quality and continuity of patient care
(b) Maintenance of employee’s psychological and physical health and safety
(c) Employee satisfaction
(d) Skills mix appropriate to the needs of the patients and ward/unit

Employees will work 12 hour shifts only on a genuinely voluntary basis.

Because of known health effects and other concerns from working extended shifts or long hours, 12 hour shifts should only be worked under strict guidelines with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, as well as pre and post trial comparative analysis of the effects on employees working extended shifts or long hours.

The federal award covering Victorian nurses, and most collective workplace agreements do not provide for shift lengths greater than 10 hours nor for an employee to work more than 48 hours in any one week. Therefore there must be a formal written agreement with the ANMF (Vic branch) to any 12 hour shift arrangements.

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12 hour shift guidelines

1. 12 hour shift trials cannot proceed unless there is a majority of ANMF members, or persons eligible to be members, in the ward/unit willing to be involved in such a trial.
2. The trial roster pattern must offer a genuine mix of 8, 10 and 12 hour shifts.
3. 12 hour shifts must be optional to each employee within the unit.
4. Roster pattern consisting of blocks of no more than 4 consecutive shifts, even distribution of days off, forward rotation of shifts and no extension of work beyond 12 hours.
5. Regard must be given to the health and safety implications of 12 hour shifts and appropriate provisions made.
6. Appropriate education in relation to 12 hour shifts, including the health and safety effects, must be provided to employees.
7. 12 hour shifts must be trialled for at least 6-12 months after initial agreement with ANMF.
8. Provision must be made for the ongoing monitoring and regular review of 12 hour shifts including final review prior to permanent introduction.
9. Following the trial of 12 hour shifts, employees must vote on their continuation and there must be a majority in favour and written agreement with ANMF for continuation to occur.

Professional development

On wards/units where 12 hour shift agreements exist, appropriate arrangements must be made to relieve employees from duty to ensure they can undertake Professional Development.

Workplace meetings with the ANMF (Vic Branch)

The ANMF (Vic Branch) is to be involved in members meetings on wards/units where 12 hour shifts exist.

These meetings are to be planned with the ANMF (Vic Branch) with set agenda items for discussion that will have affect in those areas that have a 12 hour shift roster.

Appropriate arrangements must be made to relieve employees from each unit to ensure that they can attend such meetings.