

ANMF Newsflash: North West Regional Hospital

On Wednesday 8 April 2020, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) Secretary Emily Shepherd, wrote to the North/North West CEO of the Tasmania Health Service (THS) regarding members concerns in relation to the current North West outbreak of COVID-19. Specifically, the ANMF raised the below, which are compiled along with the response from THS (italics);

- Members are continuing to learn of more positive COVID-19 cases from their own wards/units through the media or social media via the Public Health Updates rather than from their own management area.

This matter will be raised with the THS Emergency Operations Centre.

- NWRH members report feeling ostracized when in the community (like at the supermarket) and their usual supports in dealing with their frustration and debriefing have largely been removed (including social gatherings after work or attending the gym). They have enquired about counselling on site that members can access at the time when feeling overwhelmed as well as possible regular times made available.

THS are working on some formal psychological support services for staff, we should be able to get those going very soon.

- Members in the Emergency Department (ED) report having to shower when a ventilator circuit becomes disconnected and after a shift. However, there is only two showers in the ED available to staff. Is there a possibility for portable showers like those brought in for Intensive Care Unit (ICU) staff?

Corporate Services are arranging for some portable shower cabins to be set up in the hospital areas. We wanted to make sure that what is provided has some form of heating given the cooler weather.

The ANMF continue to press THS for a more comprehensive response and action to these matters and further updates and advice will be provided as they come to hand.

Further to the above ANMF understand the following regarding vulnerable employees; THS have commenced discussions with staff that are may be in an at risk group for COVID-19 (high risk groups

have been highlighted in previous newsflash). Several options are being proposed; not working in hot areas, working only with certain patient cohorts, options to work from home or early retirement. These are just options and cannot be forced on anyone and further should be done in consultation.

We also understand that THS have asked staff to choose which workplace they predominately want to work at for those who are also working in aged care facilities. ANMF legal advice is that such a request is not enforceable. In relation to members who work over both campuses with THS, we are advised that THS will be requesting that this practice cease. Again, no employee should be disadvantaged as a result of this request and members are encouraged to ask THS to allow for a temporary increase to their hours and or the ability pick up extra shifts at the site of their choosing. ANMF will secure further information on behalf of members in relation to this development and provide an update shortly.

If members are concerned regarding unfair treatment in relation to these matters or if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact our Member Support Team on 1800 001 241. Alternatively, email membersupport@anmftas.org.au. Due to COVID-19 the Team are now practicing social isolation and working from home, bearing this in mind, email is the preferred and fastest way of contacting them.

Authorised by Emily Shepherd, Branch Secretary

9 April 2020