

ANMF COVID-19 Newsflash: Meercroft Care

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) wrote to Meercroft Care management to seek an update on information in relation to your facility and their response to the current Omicron COVID-19 situation in the Tasmanian community.

Specifically, the ANMF has asked of your facility the following questions in italics, and response from your employer in bold.

Please note this is the information that the facility has provided us, if the answers below are contradictory to what you are experiencing, please advise the ANMF via our Member Support Team so we can take further action with the facility.

- 1. Could you please provide details on the strategies implemented to reduce transmission of the Omicron strain in your facility/facilities? Or alternatively, please feel free to provide a copy of your outbreak management plan.*

We are in constant contact with the Aged Care Emergency Operations Centre.

*Members please note The Outbreak Management plan has been provided to the ANMF, if you have any specific queries regarding the plan, please do not hesitate to contact us.

- 2. Can you confirm that you have sufficient PPE and hand sanitizer to allow staff, and residents, to be kept safe during this pandemic (particularly if there were to be an outbreak at your facility)?*

Reporting on stocks, I can confirm Meercroft Care is well stocked with all supplies and stock usage is monitored daily.

- 3. Have staffing been fit tested for N95 masks? If no, when is this to occur and what are the interim safety measures that will be established while staff are waiting for fit testing?*

Staff have been fit tested for N95 Masks

4. *What payments or access to special leave will be granted for staff who are required to isolate pending getting access to a COVID test and obtaining the subsequent result? Noting that access to testing is now significantly delayed.*

As per Fair Work Website staff will be able to use their sick leave, provided the employee complies with their notice and evidence requirements. If they do not have any sick leave, employees can negotiate to use other forms of leave i.e. annual leave, long service leave or unpaid leave.

*Members please note there are additional payments available through the Federal and State government in instances where you have exhausted all your sick leave requirements.

5. *In the instance that staff are required to receive a third COVID booster dose, will there be access to additional special paid leave/time to attend a booster appointment? If a staff member has an adverse reaction to the booster, will paid leave cover this time as well?*

If a staff member requires time to attend a booster appointment we try and support the staff member as much as possible, staff have left their shift to attend an appointment as we have been fortunate enough to have the clinic close by. If they need time off to attend an appointment for a Booster which will take more time, then they are able to access their sick leave. We are trying to again organize vaccination clinics on site to support staff as well. As I'm sure you are aware, we have previously gone to great lengths to help support our staff receive their vaccinations and this will be no different with the Booster.

6. *Are there any additional leave (over and above personal leave) arrangements available to staff who, not being unwell themselves, need to self-isolate or care for someone (e.g. child) that will be provided?*

We are able to offer paid or unpaid carer's leave to care for a family member or a member of their household who is sick with COVID-19. If a staff member is unwell themselves, they are able to access their sick leave providing the employee complies with their notice and evidence requirements. Again, we encourage staff to come to us should they be concerned or have any issues at which time the specific circumstances can be discussed.

7. *Will you be providing Rapid Antigen Testing for staff members? If so, what will the process be for access to these tests?*

We are already conducting RAT test of staff on site using the kits provided by the Commonwealth which tests 25 people per kit, we have ordered 2000 tests and are

waiting for them to arrive and once here we will be able to provide them to staff when required

8. *Are you willing to commit to presumptive workers compensation if a staff member becomes unwell, after a workplace exposure, with COVID-19?*

As it currently stands, we are unable to answer this hypothetical given that we will be bound by our Insurer and also the outcome would also be dependent upon the specific circumstances of any cases that may arise. We note you have used the terms “workplace exposure” however, we also note that community transmission is high at the moment and it can be difficult to isolate where that transmission occurs. Accordingly, we would need to address each situation specifically in consultation with our Insurer.

9. *If a number of staff become unwell (or are not unwell but are required to isolate pending test results) with COVID-19, what plan is in existence to maintain safe staffing levels?*

At this time our current staff are assisting to cover extra shift, if that is not possible, we have registered with an Agency who will assist with supply of staff. This will be something that we will continue to monitor closely in the coming months

10. *Are you employing additional administration staff to deal with access and entry to your facility and any extra record keeping that is required?*

Yes, we have been doing this for over 12 months now.

As a general commitment, we will also continue to maintain our open and transparent communications with all of our employees and encourage them to bring forward any concerns they may have so that they can be addressed as soon as possible.

The ANMF Tasmanian Branch is 8000 plus members strong! Supporting nurses, midwives, and care workers as the only union in Tasmania employing nurses and care workers to represent members. This is why our Organisers and Member Support Team are uniquely positioned to understand your experiences, represent you in your workplace, and offer industrial advice that's relevant to you.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact our Member Support Team via email on membersupport@anmftas.org.au. Email is the preferred and fastest way of contacting the team. Alternatively, you can phone 1800 001 241.

Authorised by Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary
19 January 2022