

ANMF COVID-19 Newsflash: Southern Cross Care Tasmania

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

Specifically, the ANMF has asked of SCCT the following questions: in *italics*, and response from your employer in **bold**. Please note that 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 if required.

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.*

Please find attached copy of our Emergency Outbreak Plan. This plan has widely been communicated to all staff, and regular outbreak management meetings are held with all key stakeholders (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)?*

We confirm that we have sufficient PPE and hand sanitizer to allow staff and residents to be kept safe. All sites have stock on site and complete daily usage and stock level reports. There is a stockpile of PPE supplies located in the North and another stockpile located in the South of the state.

3. *Have staff 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 fit test on each application, and we have other types of in 95 masks Available if the standard duckbill type does not fit correctly. Southern Cross Care have resources available for staff on how to fit test a mask; including one that talks about facial hair and they have also received training on fitting 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.*

Employees have access to that accrued leave if they are required to isolate due to the effects of the pandemic. Unpaid pandemic leave has been re-introduced by the Fair Work commission and this is available to staff who don't have accrued leave balance. In some circumstances special leave with pay can be applied for an approved by the relevant executive manager.

*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?*

In the event an employee needs to leave their rostered shift to receive a vaccination or booster, they will receive their normal rostered payment. If an employee has an adverse reaction to a vaccination, they will have access to their accrued leave.

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) with COVID-19 that will be provided?*

Staff will be able to access their accrued leave if they are required to care for family members.

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

Rapid antigen tests are available for all staff. Access and distribution of these tests is allocated by executive manager care services.

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

All staff have access to Southern Cross Care Tasmania incident reporting process to lodge a workers' compensation claim. Clients are assessed for acceptance by 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?*

A surge workforce has been inducted and is workforce ready if staffing levels are affected by employees needing to isolate or be locked down to one facility.

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

Our facilities have in place zipline entry stations that require and record digital identification and proof of vaccination upon entry. Admin staff are not required to undertake this task. The emergency preparedness outbreak plan covers the staffing strategy and contingency plans. In addition, Southern Cross care have employed search workforce on a temporary basis to assist in covering unplanned gaps in the rosters where possible. Southern Cross care have also accessed Commonwealth surge workforce for sites experiencing an outbreak.

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 (03) 6223 6777 or 1800 001 241 if outside Hobart.

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