

# ANMF COVID-19 Newsflash: Respect Aged Care

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) wrote to Respect management to seek an update on their response to the current Omicron COVID-19 situation, including the impact this is having on you and the subsequent care of residents. Specifically, the ANMF has asked of your facility the following questions: in *italics*, and response from your employer in **bold**.

**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.*

**Respect continues to place the safety and wellbeing of its employees as our highest priority.**

**Respect has an Outbreak Management Plan which has been reviewed against the Aged Care Emergency Outbreak criteria, this also contains the guidelines to follow in an outbreak, which is available for all staff in designated areas throughout the facility. The plan has been used at some Respect sites where it was found to be effective, however as the COVID situation unfolds the plan is constantly being adjusted.**

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)?*

**There is sufficient PPE at each site with further state-wide supply in 2 storage facilities 1 in the NW and 1 in the South that can be accessed by senior management if needed.**

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 have access to a fit check video for N95 masks, each site has spotters and an IPC lead assist who can help. Individuals with specific needs outside of this process can escalate their concern through the usual channels and a solution will be worked through.**

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.*  
**Staff have been advised that they can access their personal leave entitlements if they are unable to attend work due to a positive result or need to isolate. Information has been relayed to staff regarding the Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants and how this may be accessed if their circumstances require isolation and they do not qualify for any leave entitlements. As always, individuals can be assessed on a case by case basis by contacting HR.**
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?*  
**Boosters are not mandatory for aged care workers; however, Respect strongly encourage staff have boosters. Staff are able to attend booster vaccination appointments, as they were for the initial appointments. Leave entitlements are available, individuals who have exceeded their leave entitlement can be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by contacting HR**
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?*  
**No specific Covid leave however staff can access their leave entitlements in the usual way. Individual staff experiencing hardship will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by contacting HR in the first instance.**
7. *Will you be providing Rapid Antigen Testing for staff members? If so, what will the process be for access to these tests?*  
**Priority for Rapid Antigen Testing will be as per Commonwealth guidelines. Over and above the allocated supplies, Respect have privately sourced a supply of Rapid Antigen Tests, each facility will have some on hand along with guidelines for staff access.**
8. *Are you willing to commit to presumptive workers compensation if a staff member becomes unwell, after a workplace exposure, with COVID-19?*  
**Should a workplace exposure take place and an employee becomes unwell, they will be entitled to make a claim through the Workers Compensation system. Staff claims are assessed for acceptance by the insurer.**

*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?*

**Staffing levels have been reviewed against our COVID preparedness plan and are regularly reviewed. The contingency plan for each site varies. It includes roster changes with some available staff moving to 12 hour shifts along with additional management support. Our surge workforce and contingency plans includes utilising nurses normally employed in other roles in the organisation into direct care roles where appropriate. People and Culture assist by supporting staff directly, additional drinks and snacks are provided to staff working longer hours. We have also employed extra cleaning staff to ensure that nurses and carers are available to prioritise direct care.**

**Respect acknowledges that staff in facilities that have experienced an exposure or outbreak have responded admirably to ensure the safety and care of residents.**

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

**Respect have moved to a facial recognition screening process, additional administration staff have been rostered in our facility to assist new visitors with the sign in and screening process over the past months.**

10. *Could you please provide a copy of your staffing strategy and any staffing contingency plans?*

**See above**

Furthermore, as the Aged Care Sector is a Commonwealth responsibility, the ANMF Federal Acting Secretary Lori-Ann Sharp will be meeting with the Commonwealth to raise concerns and call for action:

1. To address the poor booster shot roll out in aged care
2. Ensuring that there is sufficient PPE in all aged care facilities
3. Enable access to Rapid Antigen Testing for all staff and visitors
4. To make available surge staffing availability

Also, the ANMF will collaborating with the Tasmanian Department of Health on behalf of Aged Care members via the State COVID Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) stakeholder meetings. The ANMF will continue to raise matters that the Department of Health can do to assist Aged Care Facilities such as training, education, and advice.

**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](mailto: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.

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Authorised by Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary  
3 February 2022