

ANMF COVID-19 Newsflash: North West Private Hospital

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) wrote to North West Private Hospital (NWPH) management to seek an update on information in relation to their response to the current Omicron COVID-19 situation. Specifically, the ANMF has asked of your facility the following questions: in *italics*, and response from your employer in **bold**. Please note that this is the information provided to 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.*

I have provided a copy of the hospital COVID Response Action plan which is a working document.
- 2. Can you confirm that you have sufficient PPE and hand sanitizer to allow staff, and patients, to be kept safe during this pandemic (particularly if there were to be an outbreak at your facility)?*

NWPH currently has sufficient PPE stock and hand sanitiser on hand to meet demand and is currently able to replenish at burn rate.
- 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?*

All staff have had the opportunity to be fit tested with N95 masks however not all staff took up the offer to be tested. NWPH intends to offer further testing in the coming weeks as we source new brands of N96 masks that staff have not yet been tested with.
- 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.*

NWPH staff have access to Rapid Antigen Testing through the testing facility based at the NWRH. If staff are required to isolate due to having been deemed a close contact or tested positive to COVID-19 they can access personal leave or any other accrued leave.

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?*
Staff requiring a COVID-19 booster vaccination have access to personal leave for the time of their appointment much the same as when attending a doctors appointment. If they have an adverse reaction and require time off work, they can also access personal 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 required to isolate or care for a family member have access to carer's leave, personal leave, or any other accrued leave entitlement.
7. *Will you be providing Rapid Antigen Testing for staff members? If so, what will the process be for access to these tests?*
NWPH staff have access to the NWRH RAT facility while NWPH also has access to RAT kits if required.
8. *Are you willing to commit to presumptive workers compensation if a staff member becomes unwell, after a workplace exposure, with COVID-19?*
Any case of COVID workplace exposure will be assessed individually however it is likely in a scenario where a staff member becomes unwell after being exposed to a confirmed case in the workplace that workers compensation would be approved.
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?*
If staff availability affects our ability to maintain sufficient staffing levels NWPH will look at options such as FIFO and DIDO agency staff and then potentially reducing admissions and inpatient activity as necessary.
10. *Are you employing additional administration staff to deal with access and entry to your facility and any extra record keeping that is required?*

NWPH has allocated additional nursing and non-nursing staff to process RAT's on patient admission and to screen visitors during visiting hours.

11. *Confirmation of your support for additional 15-minute hydration and comfort break due to workloads and working while in PPE.*

NWPH has not yet implemented 15-minute hydration and comfort breaks but is not adverse to doing so if and when the use of full PPE is required for extended periods.

12. *Could you please provide a copy of your staffing strategy and any staffing contingency plans*
NWPHs staffing strategy remains unchanged with the intention to staff to our forecast activity. If or when this is not achievable due to human resource shortages we will look at options such as FIFO or DIDO agency staff and then potentially reducing admission and inpatient activity as necessary. These strategies are outlined in the hospitals COVID Response Action Plan.

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 if outside Hobart.

Authorised by Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary
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