

A Guide for Calling your State Member of Parliament

Making a phone call to your local State Member of Parliament is a powerful way of informing them of your concerns. In this case it's important to let your Member of Parliament know that many crucial services in hospitals are relying on unpaid work to remain operational.

When you call your local State Member of Parliament it's very unlikely that you'll speak to the Member directly. You're more likely to speak to one of their staff members. You should let them know that you are a voter in the electorate and that you would like your message passed on to the Member of Parliament.

It's best to keep your phone call to one issue so that it can be properly recorded. You should also ask the person you speak to about having the Member of Parliament respond, in writing, to your call with their position on unpaid work being structurally relied on to keep crucial services in hospitals operational.

During the conversation you may be asked questions and you should answer them directly; but if you don't know the answer it's okay to say so – make sure you note down the question so you can get more information. If you find that you disagree with the position being taken make sure to remain calm and collected. It won't be good if you end up having an argument with the Member of Parliament or their staff members.

Below is a sample call script that you can use for yourself. Your call is more likely to be recorded if it doesn't sound like it is from a script so we *strongly recommend* that you personalise your phone call. Your personal story is always more powerful than a script.

Sample Script for calling a Member of Parliament

Hello,

My name is [insert your name] and I am a voter in the electorate.

I'd like to raise with Mr/Mrs/Ms [insert name of your state Member of Parliament] that I'm concerned about the fact that pathology services in Victorian hospitals remain operational due to a growing and unsustainable trend in unpaid work due to excessively high workloads, which will have a direct impact on the quality of healthcare offered in Victoria.

More than 80% of all patients in the public health system get their clinical diagnosis from a pathology test of one kind or another but funding cuts by successive State and Federal governments has resulted in more work and fewer scientists.

It means people are doing unpaid work because they can't simply get all of the work expected of them done in ordinary shift hours. However when I discovered that our managers refuse to call-in extra staff or slowly replace staff when they leave, it became obvious why unpaid work and workloads has dramatically increased.

We're committed to delivering world-class healthcare but when you're regularly doing unpaid work, it puts us at risk of injury and illness and making mistakes. Mistakes which could have an adverse impact on a patient.

I don't want Victorians to suffer a reduction in the quality of healthcare they receive but when workloads continue to grow and services rely on unpaid work to remain operational, it is inevitable that healthcare standards will suffer.

The state government can fix this problem by investing in real workforce planning and the employment of more scientists and technicians, not more health assistants who do not have the training or experience to replace scientists.

This is an issue I vote on and will be crucial to whether or not the Member of Parliament has my vote in the future.

I strongly urge Mr/Mrs/Ms [insert name of your state Member of Parliament] to tell Premier Daniel Andrews and Health Minister Jill Hennessy to act to reduce workloads and slash the amount of unpaid work done.

Thank you for your time.

Goodbye.

Important information for your phone call

We know that you're not an expert on every little detail about the public pathology across Victoria and that's why we've put together some important information you can refer to.

1. More than 80% of all patients in the public health system get their clinical diagnosis from a pathology test of one kind or another but funding cuts by successive State and Federal governments has resulted in more work and fewer scientists.
2. And while many in public health advocate the use of 'health assistants', the reality is that they're adding to the workload and increasing concerns about quality and reliability of testing as their work has to be reviewed.
3. Unfortunately some private pathology contractors are not interested in quality healthcare standards with evidence showing they're stripping hospital laboratories of testing and scientists. The loss of local pathology testing can put other key clinical services at risk like emergency departments, obstetrics and oncology.
4. And the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia warns of a global shortage of medical scientists to undertake the growing number of tests. Without medical scientists undertaking testing it can compromise the delivery of services and crucially the timeliness, quality and accuracy of diagnosis.
5. The Union is very concerned that health care services may be unable to meet required world-class quality standards while pathology continues to be treated as a non-essential service with a race to the bottom attitude from private providers in public hospitals.

Don't forget that your personal story is very powerful and that it will likely have more impact during your phone call with your State Member of Parliament.

If you want more information contact the Union on (03) 9623 9623 or at enquiry@msav.org.au