



Stat Report 2021/26

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Private pathology profits from COVID-19 misery

When the pandemic hit every public pathology laboratory was ready to put in the work and they made sure they were ready to do the rapid testing and reporting needed to help protect Victorians, and Australians. Remember the world leading research and development work performed by VIDRL. Sadly, we can't say the same for private pathology providers.

Private pathology providers claimed they had no capacity and were not capable of performing the high-volume rapid testing and reporting needed to protect Victorians and Australians.

Enter the Morrison Government's decision to increase the Medicare payment for private pathology companies performing COVID tests by up to 250%, and bingo, private pathology was overnight performing massively increased numbers of tests and harvesting massively increased income and profits from Medicare payments. It is evident the heavy lobbying of private pathology providers on the Morrison Government was extraordinarily rewarding.

We have witnessed since March 2020, with the pandemic still raging, the continuing need to perform huge rapid testing numbers.

Last financial year, Australian Clinical Labs' profit rose 46 per cent to \$60.4 million. Sonic Healthcare saw an even bigger profit rise of 149 per cent to \$1.3 billion. Dorevitch's parent, Helius, reported revenue soaring to \$1.9 billion, up around 30%.

The ongoing waves of COVID-19, its variants and an increased Medicare subsidy are providing private pathology companies continuing soaring revenues and profits.

The Medicare payment windfall was not enough. ACL also received JobKeeper payment from the Morrison Government, and to further its profiteering, cut the hours/incomes of many staff across the state, some of whom are yet to have these reinstated.

Victorians are entitled to judge private pathology providers for putting profit margins ahead of public health concerns. It is clear that the Andrews Government needs to deliver on its promise to reform public pathology and removing private providers from our public health system must be a central part of the reform.

In good news, we have seen a major victory for the Victorian Psychologists Association over the graduate program recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Public Mental Health System, which you can read about in this edition of STAT Report.

In other news, the Union has been working hard to make sure our operations are not too badly affected during the COVID-19 crisis and the various lockdowns we've experienced. The requirements to work from home has to-date meant that members could only contact us via email or text. We know this hasn't been the best option for some members.

However, we have now finalised implementing a new telephone system which means members can ring us again to seek support, advice and assistance with workplace issues. Members can call on:

MSAV: (03) 9623 9623

VPA: (03) 9623 9625

AHP: (03) 9623 9624

As always, you can raise workplace issues by emailing us at enquiry@msav.org.au

In solidarity
Paul Elliott
Secretary

Royal Commission into Victoria's Public Mental Health System Graduate Program Recommendation

In STAT Report no 2021/24 on 23 August we reported that the Victorian government had failed the first test in its promise to fully fund the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Public Mental Health System.

The Mental Royal Commission in its interim report in 2019 recommended that 60 graduate places across allied health, psychology and pharmacy be funded.

The government only provided funding for 43 positions.

The VPA fiercely advocated at meetings with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division of the Department of Health and with the Minister's Office that the full 60 places should be funded.

That advocacy has been successful with the full 60 graduate positions being funded in 2022 and each year thereafter, as per the Royal Commission's recommendation.

We also opposed the proposal to fund 37 Occupational Therapists and Social Worker positions and only 6 psychology Registrar positions. That has now been scrapped as well.

Health services will now be able to nominate the disciplines that they want to recruit as part of an expression of interest process.

That should mean that health services will be asking for more than just 6 psychology Registrar positions in total. And all positions are fully funded with an allocation of funds for psychology educators and supervisors to support the new Registrar positions.

The VPA thanks members for your feedback.

However, applications for the graduate program funding close on 29 September.

We know it's a tight time frame that's why we encourage members working in mental health services to promote the opportunity to employ psychology Registrars under this program to their directors and that they should apply for funding.



Positions not backfilled? Let us know

Union Round Up

St Vincent's members pass important motion

The Union held a meeting with members, organised by our Job Rep Sergio Monsalve Tobon, at St Vincent's Hospital to discuss the progress of negotiations for a new Public Sector enterprise agreement.

There was an excellent turnout, and we thank members for attending the meeting. It gave the Union an opportunity to outline the negotiations and sticking points as the Union continues to work through matters with employers.

The meeting passed the following motion:

“For over a year we have been negotiating in good faith with the state government for a new EBA. Throughout this time we have continued to provide the behind the scenes work that ensure our public hospitals keep functioning. Our medical scientists perform pathology testing for diagnosis and patient monitoring, including Covid-19 testing. Our pharmacists ensure the safe and effective use of medicines within our hospitals. Our dieticians, among other roles, provide nutritional therapy to some of the most critically ill patients in our hospitals. Our psychologists dealing with overwhelming demands for mental health services.

The State government is currently offering us a 2% yearly pay rise over four years with no sign up bonus. In the year to June inflation run at 3.8% due to the global pandemic (the course of which will go on for years to come). The government's offer is effectively a nine month pay freeze with a pay cut in real terms every year over four years. This offer is less than the increases offered to nurses in their recent negotiations. We reject the Government's approach which suggests we do not deserve at least the same increase.

The state government has praised health workers throughout the pandemic and told us time and time again how highly they value our work. If this was done with sincerity their current pay offer doesn't demonstrate it. If the question is lack of money we note that in the first year of the pandemic the combined wealth of the richest 250 people in Australia increased by 25% (\$93 billion) and in the year to June corporate profits increased by 7%. There is more than enough money in this country to properly fund public health.

Therefore we call on the state government to at the very least immediately meet our modest wage claim with a fair and reasonable offer.”

Monash Health – Change Impact Statement on UKG Dimensions

The Union has been forwarded a Change Impact Statement from Monash Health regarding UKG Dimensions.

While this seems to be about the simple introduction of software, we have reason to believe this will amount to the reintroduction of Biometric clock on or finger scanning and throw up a number of data security concerns.

We understood that the Department had agreed to a pause in consultation processes owing to the effects of lockdown and Covid more generally upon the Victorian Health workforce – it seems this was only lip service and both the department and Monash intend to require its already exhausted workforce to enter into consultation over Kronos and finger scanning once again.

Please begin discussing this with your managers and colleagues and let us know if there are concerns about the UKG Kronos system and of course finger scanning.

To provide feedback or raise questions please contact Heidi at heidib@msav.org.au

Special Leave for COVID-19 vaccines

Below is what is being advised by the Victorian Department of Health with respect to employees in the public sector who have an adverse reaction after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine (emphasis is ours):

Where an employee experiences an adverse event after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine

Employees may experience minor side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. There is some overlap between an expected adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) following the COVID-19 vaccination and the presenting symptoms of COVID-19. This can lead to uncertainty around requirements for testing and isolation in a person with symptoms following vaccination.

The Department of Health has issued Recommendations for testing and isolation following COVID-19 vaccination which provide guidance on distinguishing AEFIs from other symptoms of illness that an employee may experience.

Where an employee is required to isolate in the circumstances described in the Recommendations for testing and isolation following COVID-19 vaccination, the employee has access to paid Special Leave for the requisite period of isolation.

Paid Special Leave should also be made available to an employee who was prioritised in Group 1A or Group 1B to receive a COVID-19 vaccination and who suffers an AEFI that does not require them to isolate but does result in them being unable to attend work because of the symptoms experienced. To access paid Special Leave in this circumstance, the employee is required to provide a medical certificate confirming that the reason for not attending work is due to an AEFI that does not require them to isolate.

In this instance, **paid Special Leave will be capped at a maximum of two days per COVID-19 vaccination received, or four days of leave in total per employee across all COVID-19 vaccinations received by the employee in 2021.**

Employers should retrospectively authorise paid Special Leave to an employee who has already received a COVID-19 vaccination as part of the Group 1A or Group 1B vaccinations and took Personal Leave for any absence that resulted from an AEFI that did not require them to isolate. The evidentiary requirement may be waived in such cases and the employee may have their Personal Leave recredited.

Employers should assess such situations on a case-by-case basis.

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Raffle closes 1 October 2021 - Winner drawn 4 October 2021

Support the 2021 Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA Solidarity Raffle to stand with workers around the world striving for justice and decent work!

VPA Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Victorian Psychologists Association Inc. will be held on Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 1.00 pm.

Following the AGM, a Professional Development Seminar will be held from 2.00 pm. The seminar will cover the Implications for Psychologists of the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health Services

Presenter: Dr Suzie Dean

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown and its associated restrictions, both the AGM and PD Seminar will be delivered online via Zoom.

Zoom Details: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88120993395?pwd=U09QaS9YQUJwU1lhWDdTekxOcWdYZz09>

Meeting ID: 881 2099 3395 **Passcode:** VPA

VPA Inc members can access relevant [documents for the AGM and Zoom details on the website here](#)

The same Zoom details will be used for the Professional Development Seminar.

Any additional information will be sent to members closer to the date. If you have any queries, please contact us at enquiry@vicpsych.org.au

VPA Professional Development Workshop

In this interactive workshop, Suzie Dean and Sarina Smale of Stewart Consultancies will discuss the main principles underpinning the Recommendations of the Royal Commission, the structure of the reforms and the process by which they are to be implemented. Rosemary Kelly will critically review the workforce implications of the Recommendations, and report on progress to date. Opportunities for Psychologist involvement in the reform process will be considered and discussed.

The workshop will run from **2.00 pm to 4.30 pm on 22 September, with a Q&A session and open discussion scheduled at 4.00 pm.**

Zoom Details: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88120993395?pwd=U09QaS9YQUJwU1lhWDdTekxOcWdYZz09>

Meeting ID: 881 2099 3395 **Passcode:** VPA

Pre-reading and resources can be found at <http://msav.org.au/documents/member-documents/professional-development/vpa-professional-development-2021/>

We recommend that participants read the Workforce Fact Sheet and familiarise themselves with the other documents prior to the Workshop.

Save the Date: MSAV/HSU #4 Annual General Meetings

The MSAV/HSU Victoria #4 Branch Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 20th October 2021.

The HSU Victoria #4 Branch Annual General Meeting will be held at 12:30pm with the MSAV Annual General Meeting to be held at 1:00pm.

Members can access the [HSU #4 Annual Financial Report 2021 on our website here.](#)

Contacting the Union

It has been our goal to ensure that the impact on our operations have been minimised throughout the lockdowns and requirements to work from home.

That's why we're happy to let members know that the Union has finalised implementing a new phone system which means that members can ring the Union again to seek support, advice and assistance with workplace issues.

MSAV: (03) 9623 9623
VPA: (03) 9623 9625
AHP: (03) 9623 9624

As always members can raise workplace issues by emailing the Union at enquiry@msav.org.au

COVID-19 Vaccinations

The Union strongly supports members receiving the COVID-19 vaccine when you can; after all we support science and the science that's behind the vaccine.

There are special leave provisions available when getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Sometimes our friends have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines just because you work in the health system, and sometimes you might not have all the answers. The biggest question that seems to keep coming up is what are the benefits and risks of the vaccines; check out this great video from the Australian Academy of Science on the risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccines - [COVID-19 vaccine: Risks and benefits on Vimeo](#)



As a Union we believe in science and the science of vaccinations; as such we believe that to protect yourself, your colleagues, your patients and your family, it's vital to get the vaccination done as quickly as possible.

If you have any queries regarding the vaccine rollout and how it may impact you, please contact the Union at enquiry@msav.org.au

Membership Issues – Experiencing hardship?

Non-Members

For non-Union members who work in workplaces across our coverage; **we will give advice immediately over the phone if they join.**

In the spirit of supporting health workers through this unprecedented time we hope you might have a quiet word to colleagues who are not members and suggest that there has never been a more important time to join a Union. Let them know that it is as simple as going to our website and [clicking on the 'JOIN' link](#).

Members

If you are in the unfortunate position of being stood down or forced on to unpaid leave, [contact us to move your membership payments to a 'non-working' subscription rate of \\$8.26 per month](#).

Psychologists: If you need help at work you need the VPA Inc.

If you are a psychologist and not in the VPA, you are taking unnecessary risks with your reputation and career. [Download an application form and join today.](#)

Common beaches of employment entitlements and negotiation of enterprise agreements

The VPA routinely assists members over issues such as harassment and bullying, under classification, organisational re-structuring, incorrect calculation of leave entitlements and health and safety. In addition, it negotiates enterprise agreements for psychologists in the public and private sectors to ensure that rates of pay and conditions remain up to date.

Support the Healthy Futures campaign



The Union strongly believes that climate change is union business. We know that climate change threatens our health by increasing the risks of heatwaves, bushfires, droughts and storms, displacing people and straining our health systems.

Right now, Aware Super, Australia's biggest health industry super fund, is investing our money in fossil fuels - oil and gas. While they have plans to divest from fossil fuels, it's vital that we maintain the pressure to make sure they divest faster to ensure a reduction in financial issues posed by stranded assets like fossil fuelled power stations.

Join us in asking Aware Super to divest from fossil fuels at <https://www.healthyfutures.net.au/awaresuper>

Stopping Gendered Violence at Work

Far too often women are attacked, harassed and threatened in their workplaces. And it needs to stop. That's why the Union is fighting back against gendered violence in the workplace – it's a very serious occupational health and safety issue.

Gendered violence is like a disease in our workplaces. Working women's experience of violence at work indicates that the problem of gendered violence is endemic in our workplaces.

Sign up to support the campaign at: <http://www.unionwomen.org.au/stopgv>

Student Strike 4 Climate

On October 15, thousands of young voters will hit the streets to strike for the climate and put pressure on the Government and MPs to do the right thing.

Join the Student Strike 4 Climate on October 15 – details and RSVP here: <https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/oct15>

Do you need access to Domestic Violence services?

If you're experiencing domestic violence and need help, here is a list of Victorian services which may be able to assist you.

[Safe Steps \(formerly Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria\)](#)

[Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria \(FVPLS\)](#)

[Centre Against Sexual Assault \(CASA\) Forum](#)

[Community Legal Centres](#)

[Court Network](#)

[Domestic Violence Victoria](#)

[Elder Rights Advocacy \(ERA\)](#)

[Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service](#)

[inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence](#)

[Men's Referral Service](#)

[No To Violence](#)

[QLife Australia](#)

[Seniors Rights Victoria \(SRV\)](#)

[The Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence](#)

[Victoria Legal Aid \(VLA\)](#)

[Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency](#)

[Women with Disabilities Victoria \(WDV\)](#)

[Women's Housing Ltd](#)

[Women's Information Referral Exchange \(WIRE\)](#)

[Women's Legal Service](#)

[Women's refuges](#)

Worth Reading: Finally there's reason for pandemic optimism, but don't let it trump reality

"Australians need a good dose of hope and freedom, but not at the expense of the facts and figures.

Amid deep COVID fatigue and frustration has come a loss of patience with restrictions, with our leaders now under increasing pressure to ease the rules.

It's understandable given the damage to our lives, economy and mental health.

As we enter our second spring amid lockdown and COVID-related strife, much of life has now been paused for almost two years. There's deep concern about the long-term impact, especially on young people.

And with the so-called 'road out' still vaguely mapped, seeing a future is not easy."

Read the entire article by Zoe Daniel in The New Daily at: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/opinion/2021/09/03/zoe-daniel-covid-pandemic-optimism/>

Worth Reading: Australia's 'A' rating on human rights is under threat with a handpicked, politically engineered commissioner

"The Morrison government's handpicked appointment of a new human rights commissioner, Lorraine Finlay, threatens to undermine the independence and legitimacy of the Australian Human Rights Commission itself.

It could also damage Australia's credibility on the international stage and lead to a downgrading of our commission by the body that serves as a watchdog for human rights commissions around the world.

National human rights institutions are independent, legal bodies established by parliaments, which use the powers of the state to promote and protect human rights.

The maintenance of this independence is critical. Human rights commissions often tread a fine line in ensuring they have support and adequate funding from governments, while also maintaining the ability to freely criticise them."

Read the entire article by Justine Nolan in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/australias-a-rating-on-human-rights-is-under-threat-with-a-handpicked-politically-engineered-commissioner-167626>

Worth Reading: Time is running out for the Morrison government to be fit for purpose

"The rumblings are getting louder that the Morrison government is being increasingly perceived as not fit for purpose.

A compelling witness for the prosecution came forward on the weekend with a devastating contribution on Twitter.

South Australian independent senator Rex Patrick, an important interlocutor for the government when it tries to marshal the numbers in the upper house, did not mince his words. He tweeted he was "done with 'em".

His anger up in lights, accusing the Prime Minister of "gifting hard-earned taxpayer money to his business mates & donors makes him the most shameless & unethical PM ever".

That was just a start."

Read the entire article by Paul Bongiorno in The New Daily at:

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/09/07/paul-bongiorno-morrison-government-fit-for-purpose/>

Join the Union

Are your workloads increasing? Are your stress levels increasing? [Join the Union today!](#)

To protect our professions, we must strengthen our collective voice by increasing our membership. You can help by sharing the image below on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit or your favourite social media platform.

Your Union is on Facebook

Keep up to date with what's happening by liking us on Facebook

[Medical Scientists Association of Victoria](#) | [Victorian Psychologists Association Inc](#) | [Association of Hospital Pharmacists](#)

Australian Unions Member Benefits app

As a Union member you get access to exclusive Member Benefits. The program has expanded to include:

- Discounted movie tickets for Village, Hoyts, Palace and Event cinemas.
- Discounted electronic gift cards including major theme parks, zoos and aquariums.
- A discounted accommodation booking site.
- A new secure member only website and smart phone app.

All this is free to all members of affiliated unions – that means you! If you have not got a login and would like join in [register for Member Benefits now.](#)



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If not print out a copy and leave it on the noticeboard or in the staff room for your colleagues.