



Stat Report 2021/36

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What a year 2021 was

2021 was another difficult year as the COVID-19 pandemic raged on, with closed state borders and lock downs. We know it's been a difficult year for many members too.

Throughout the year the Union had to enforce our agreements with employers who thought the pandemic meant that your rights at work were somehow suspended.

The Union had to regularly push back against a range of efforts to make changes that were clearly not related to dealing with the pandemic, which conflicted with Department advice that only pandemic related changes were to be made.

The Union continued to bargain for a new Public Sector agreement, which we started in 2020. Sadly, we only received an offer once we were forced to pursue orders for a protected industrial action ballot. It was also disappointing to discover that the vast majority of our members are excluded from receiving the full hospital surge allowance, despite health workers being called heroes of the pandemic; and many of our members being in direct contact with COVID samples and patients.

However, it has been extremely pleasing to have hundreds of members attend meetings to discuss the offer we've received. There is no doubt that members are actively engaged and are keenly aware of the matters being negotiated on their behalf, along with the issues associated with having to negotiate for a new agreement that has taken 16 months to-date to get to this point.

While we have been negotiating a new Public Sector agreement, we also engaged in negotiations for new agreements across a range of private sector employers. There is no doubt that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our ability to negotiate, with a number of employers agreeing to short-term agreements rolling over conditions until next year to undertake negotiations for new longer-term agreements.

A special mention to members at NextSense who have voted up a new agreement.

There are details about recent enterprise negotiations in *Union Round Up*. I should also mention that preparations are underway to begin negotiations for a new Community Sector agreement in 2022.

We were pleased to see in this year's state budget funding going towards pathology, including reforms to reform public pathology in public hospitals, along with further significant funding boosts to mental health. The Union has been actively involved in discussions around reforms to public pathology and we will continue to vigorously advocate for public pathology being restored in public hospitals.

The year saw the release of the report and recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. The VPA has fiercely advocated for the expansion of the number of psychologists in our public health system.

Sadly, the state budget saw further funding dedicated to increasing the number of mental health nurses and counsellors rather than expanding psychologist numbers.

However, we saw an admission by the Victorian Government that there are not enough pharmacists in our public health system. This is an issue we're addressing through our (prolonged) negotiations for a new Public Sector agreement.

It has been a massive year for the Union as we've vigorously advocated for the increased employment of people in all our disciplines. Ironically, understaffing in health remains the key industrial issue of the 21st century.

This year we took additional measures to ensure that we could support members by moving our entire telephone system into the cloud. It has meant that instead of relying almost entirely on email for members to raise workplace issues with us, members have been able to call us again.

We know that it can be easier to speak to someone about an issue rather than sending an email.

There are a number of reasons why people join the Union. To improve your terms and conditions at work is usually the most important. Another reason is industrial support.

Being part of the union means knowing that if something goes wrong, you always have someone you can turn to.

If you've been underpaid, unfairly targeted and discriminated against, injured at work, or terminated, know that you can always turn to the Union for support.

In particular, we have been able to support members navigate the Fair Work Commission, Equal Opportunity Commission and the Federal Circuit Court to recover over \$150,000 in 12 months associated with underpayment claims, unfair dismissal claims, general protection claims and others.

Reflecting on 2021, we're very proud of the support we've provided members through some pretty challenging times.

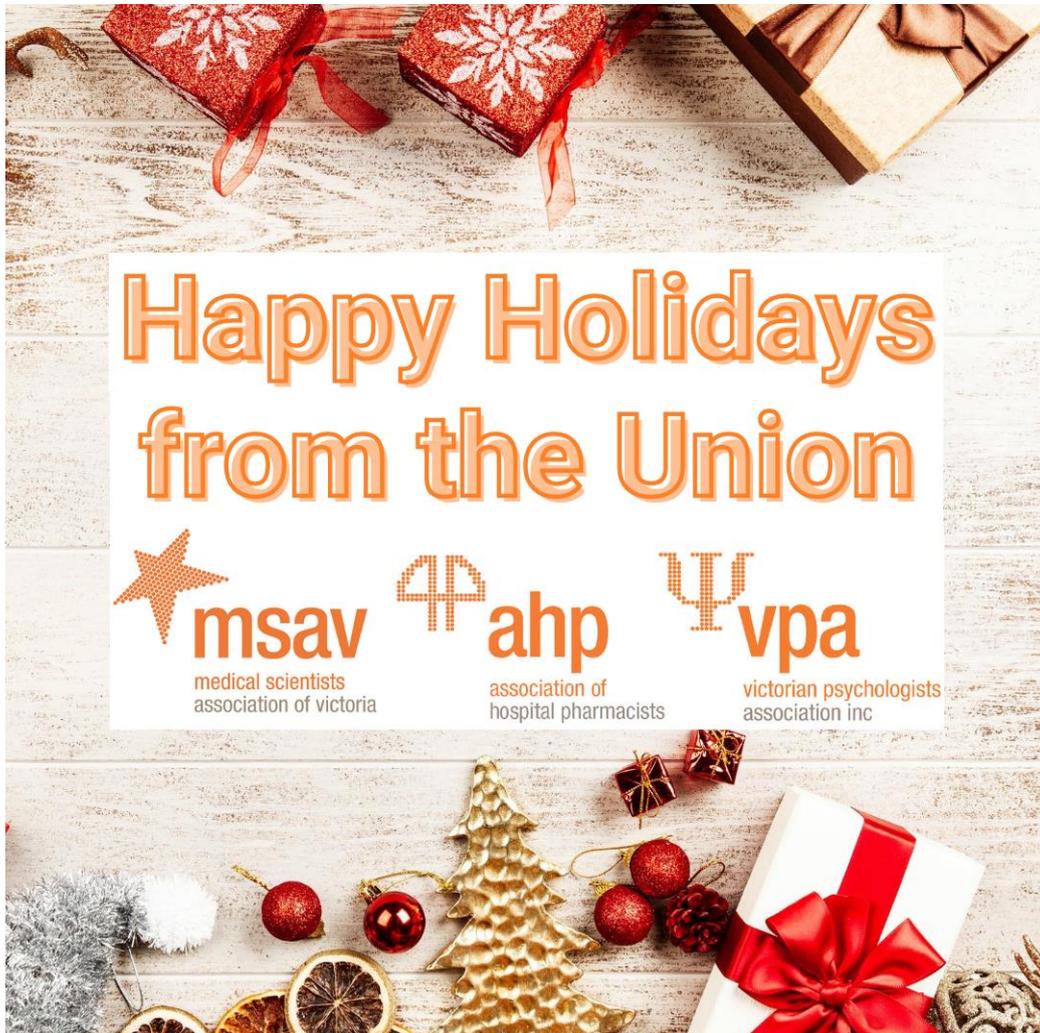
If you're working over the Christmas/New Year period, we want to thank you for ensuring that Victorians can access essential, world-class healthcare. If you're taking annual leave, we hope that members enjoy a very well-deserved break and are able to enjoy quality time with family and friends.

I know we're looking forward to the summer break too.

Finally, I want to thank our staff who have worked tirelessly throughout this very difficult year to ensure members' rights at work were upheld, advocating for better employment conditions and more staff; and kept negotiating for better enterprise agreements.

As always, members can contact us with workplace concerns by calling on 9623 9623 or emailing us at enquiry@msav.org.au

In solidarity
Paul Elliott
Secretary



Office Closure

The Union will be closed over the summer holiday from 23 December 2021 to 4 January 2022.

During this time there will be no-one in the office, however, if you find yourself being threatened with disciplinary action or being sacked you can call 0418 543 682 for urgent advice and assistance.

Members with non-urgent issues are encouraged to contact us at enquiry@msav.org.au

Positions not backfilled? Let us know

Union Round Up

Monash IVF Scientists Agreement

We had our last bargaining meeting for the year on Tuesday 14 December 2021.

We provided member feedback about proposed changes to the revised classification structure and in particular on-call.

Ahead of this meeting, the union also provided Monash IVF with our additional claim for parking allowance following feedback at our last members meeting.

Meetings will resume in late January 2022 with claims concerning workload.

Genesis Medical Physicist Agreement

We had our last bargaining meeting for the year on Wednesday 15 December 2021.

At this meeting, the union provided feedback in response to the proposed changes to the classification structure.

We have now provided and received feedback on all claims.

At our last meeting for the year, Genesis let us know that we should anticipate a formal offer by late February/early March 2022 at the latest.

Between now and then, we will work through reviewing all of the feedback and consolidate this for members.

Monash IVF Counsellors Agreement

We had our last bargaining meeting for the year on Thursday 9 December 2021.

At this meeting, the union and delegates provided feedback in response to the proposed and revised classification structure. We also received additional feedback in response to claims for supervision entitlements and reimbursement of professional expenses.

Thank you again for all the incredible work Monash IVF Counsellors have invested this bargaining round into achieving a really great agreement!

Meetings will be resuming mid-January 2022 either Tuesdays or Thursdays, to be determined.

St John of God Agreement – Psychologists, Dietitians and Pharmacists

In December, the Union reached out to St John of God leadership to propose of roll over of the current agreement until November 2022, with an administrative pay increase.

We are happy to share that on Friday 17 December, management accepted our proposed offer of a 2.5% pay increase.

We are now quickly taking steps to secure this in an MOU so that increases can flow through for Christmas!

We propose to engage with members and St John of God to negotiate and renew this agreement in late 2022.

NextSense Agreement

Congratulations to members at NextSense. The proposed agreement was successfully voted up, with 94% of workers voting and 86% voting yes which is a great result.

The agreement was submitted to the Fair Work Commission in early December for approval. NextSense and the unions attended a brief mention before the Commission early last week to address some minor concerns which should be resolved early in the new year.

It is anticipated that the agreement should then be approved by the Commission in January sometime after these issues are addressed.

St Vincent's Private

Members at St Vincent's Private voted down the EBA got voted down & management have said they will not improve their offer.

The Union will be speaking with the Victorian Allied Health Professional Association about the next steps. If you have any questions, contact Heidi Brown at heidib@msav.org.au

Forensicare

We understand that Forensicare People and Culture shared an email with workers last Tuesday 14 December, which advised that the Unions would be receiving an offer before Christmas.

As soon as we received this message, the VPA immediately reached out to Forensicare's bargaining representative the VHIA, to find out when we should expect this offer. We have been following up since.

As of Wednesday 23 December 2021, the VPA has not received a wage offer or formal response to claims from Forensicare/the VHIA/or the Department.

This has been a long bargaining process and we appreciate member frustration.

We are hopeful that the progress made towards finalising the Public Sector agreement should mean that we are well placed to quickly progress bargaining for Forensicare early in the new year.

In November/December, the VPA worked closely with our Forensicare delegates to review all of our claims and prepare a comprehensive document which assesses their status.

Once bargaining resumes in January 2022, we are in the sound position to work closely with members to review an offer made and ensure that psychologists' claims are included and protected in the new agreement.

Casual workers: Have you been offered casual conversion?

Earlier this year, the National Employment Standards were changed to insert casual conversion provisions.

Additionally, employers were required to assess whether existing casual employees were eligible to be offered permanent employment under the new entitlements by *27 September 2021*.

If you are a casual employee, you should have received correspondence from your employer around this date, offering or denying permanent work.

If you work permanent hours and didn't receive this invitation, or you received advice that your employment would not be converted, get in touch if you would like support. Email enquiry@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.

Public Holiday Pay

Over the Christmas/New Year period there are numerous public holidays which means public holiday pay.

It's important to know whether you've been paid properly for the public holidays so use the flow chart below to find out what public holiday pay you're entitled to receive.

The public holidays over the festive season are 27 and 28 December as replacement days for Christmas Day and Boxing Day. 3 January will also be a public holiday to replace New Year's Day, which falls on a Saturday, as the public holiday.

This flow chart mostly applies to members working in the Public Sector so if you work in the Community and Private sectors, contact the Union to ensure that you have received the correct public holiday pay – contact the Union at enquiry@msav.org.au

Public Holiday 2021 Payments

Did you work that day?



COVID-19 Vaccinations

With the Omicron variant rapidly spreading and the seemingly increasing threat it poses, the Union strongly supports members getting a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can; after all we support science and the science that's behind the vaccines.

There are special leave provisions available to help you get a COVID-19 vaccine, which we've covered in *Union Round Up*

Check out this great video from the Australian Academy of Science on what you need to know about COVID-19



vaccine - [COVID-19 vaccine: What you need to know](#)

The Australian Academy of Science has some great resources about COVID-19 and the vaccines, which you can access and share with your family and friends. [You can find those resources here.](#)

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

Contacting the Union

Members can ring the Union 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

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>

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: 'Brain fog' during menopause is real – it can disrupt women's work and spark dementia fears

"For nearly two-thirds of women, menopause comes with an undesirable change in memory.

Despite great progress in understanding the medical aspects of menopause – a natural part of life that occurs when a woman has not had a menstrual period for 12 months – we are only beginning to recognise the experience and impact of cognitive changes during menopause.

In most cases, it appears cognitive changes – that is, problems with thinking, reasoning or remembering – during menopause are subtle and possibly temporary. But for some women, these difficulties can negatively impact work productivity. And for others, they can raise concerns about developing dementia."

Read the entire article by Caroline Gurvich, Chen Zhu and Shalini Arunogiri in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/brain-fog-during-menopause-is-real-it-can-disrupt-womens-work-and-spark-dementia-fears-173150>

Worth Reading: Planning a Christmas get-together? 8 tips to avoid a super-spreader event

"Not many more sleeps until Christmas, and all those long lunches and get-togethers with family and friends.

If you're hosting a gathering and want to avoid a super-spreader event, it's worth having a discussion with your guests to set some rules to minimise the risk of COVID transmission.

For example, should you only ask vaccinated family members and friends to attend? Or require a negative rapid antigen test before arrival?

As an expert in infection control and prevention, I can offer some information to help you to decide."

Read entire article by Thea van de Mortel in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/planning-a-christmas-get-together-8-tips-to-avoid-a-super-spreader-event-172857>

Worth Reading: Solar curtailment is emerging as a new challenge to overcome as Australia dashes for rooftop solar

"Almost a third of Australia's estimated ten million households now have solar on the roof. But as the nation moving fastest to produce energy on our homes, we are also encountering teething problems, such as "curtailment" of output.

This issue will be one we have to overcome as ever more Australians install solar. Our grids were designed primarily for large fossil fuel power stations transmitting electricity in one direction, while solar households both consume and export power.

That means in some conditions, household solar may contribute to spikes in voltage levels outside of the acceptable range, especially as voltage levels are typically already high.

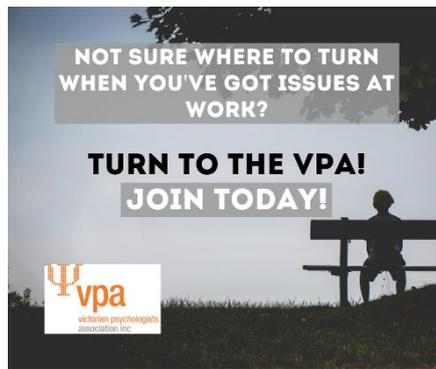
To counter this, your solar system can stop exporting to the grid or even shut down temporarily if voltage levels are too high. This is called "curtailment"."

Read the entire article by Sophie Adams, Baran Yildiz, Naomi Stringer and Shanil Samarakoon in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/solar-curtailment-is-emerging-as-a-new-challenge-to-overcome-as-australia-dashes-for-rooftop-solar-172152>

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.](#)



Share STAT Report

Is there a copy of STAT Report on your Union noticeboard or in your staff room?

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