



## Stat Report 2020/10

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### COVID-19: Working through difficult workplace issues

The Union is working very closely with the Government and Health Services to continue to address a range of industrial matters that remain unclear due to the announcement made by the Premier about non-essential business and the potential for further restrictions. The Union is representing you and to make sure your rights at work are protected while you and your colleagues work to address this major health issue.

There have been regular teleconference meetings to make sure the huge range of issues that have arisen are being properly and sensibly worked through. The Union is working together with the Government and Health Services and have agreed that proposed organisational changes that do not relate to the COVID-19 response by health services in the public sector will cease to progress until the pandemic has been controlled and a State of Emergency is no longer in effect. There is a great need right now for the Union to bolster the scientific workforce, and we do not take a step back from this responsibility because of existing severe understaffing.

However, in the short term to address the immediate crisis unfolding a range of solutions are being put forward from Health Services to ensure the workloads are not extreme and to reduce fatigue and potential exposure. Given the scale of the emergency we are facing we have adopted a strategy of displaying good-will by being flexible in our responses to proposed changes, to engage without delay with health services but also ensuring that we continue to protect your health and safety and workplace rights. Of course we are very mindful to ensure that we are cooperating in changes to ensure the pandemic is contained as quickly as possible.

The Union is also cautiously working through a range of issues in order to discourage some Health Services from attempting to use the outbreak as an opportunity of getting in place potentially lasting changes, changes that they know they wouldn't get in normal circumstances.

We are aware there are still issues around members getting information about redeployment or health and safety processes to protect from exposure and spread of COVID-19. We also know that there are growing workplace health and safety issues with a lack of personal protective equipment and general lack of protocols being implemented in some workplaces to enforce the new social distancing requirements.

I can't emphasise too often our advice that members should not work in unsafe circumstances, and if you are unsure or need support it is very important that you contact us.

### **Reminder: Union working remotely**

Our staff are able to continue working remotely doing most of the things we do normally, including conducting meetings through face-face meetings when needed, telephone and video conferencing, and of course phone and email contact.

If you require assistance please send an email to [enquiry@msav.org.au](mailto:enquiry@msav.org.au) which is constantly monitored by our staff.

We will notify members when the office will reopen and we appreciate your understanding at this time.

Paul Elliott  
Secretary



## Membership Issues

### **Non-Members**

We have had many contacts from non-Union members who work in workplaces across our coverage desperate for advice. We are often able to give this immediately over the phone if they join, which they are agreeing to do in significant numbers.

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.

### **Member**

If you are in the unfortunate position of being stood down or forced on to unpaid leave, don't forget to contact us to move your membership payments to a non-working' subscription rate of \$8.26 per month.

## Union Round Up

### **COVID-19 Advice**

#### **Being told to get a medical certificate:**

Members have been reporting that they are being asked to provide medical certificates to prove they don't have COVID-19. There is no industrial, medical or logical basis for your employer to make this demand; and they cannot direct you to have a consultation with your, or the employers', health practitioner.

If you are asked to get a medical certificate to prove you are free of COVID-19 please contact the Union as soon as possible on 9623 9623 or at [enquiry@msav.org.au](mailto:enquiry@msav.org.au)

#### **Here's the Union's advice for members at St John of God:**

SJoG is providing 'special paid sick leave' in the event a worker is required to undergo a period of self-isolation in accordance with Australian Government Department of Health's guidelines. This paid leave is in addition to workers' existing paid personal (sick/carers) leave entitlements. And, if a worker is required to self-isolate following travel, SJoG will also provide special paid sick leave. However, SJoG is encouraging workers have

regard to the Governments travel advisories. If a worker subsequently becomes unwell and is declared unfit for duty, this special paid leave will cease and workers will be able to access their existing leave entitlements.

Regardless of whether you work in the public, community or private health sectors, should you find yourself having to be isolated whether at the direction of your employer or due to contact outside of the workplace, please contact the Union as quickly as possible on 9623 9623 or at [enquiry@msav.org.au](mailto:enquiry@msav.org.au)

### **Workplace Health and Safety:**

It is first and foremost the responsibility of your health service to provide you with a safe and healthy workplace, which includes:

- properly and responsibly staffing to appropriate levels
- managing workloads when service demands surge
- providing personal protective equipment
- enforcing social distancing requirements

It is also your employer's responsibility to provide you with information about how your health service is responding and how they are going to keep your workplace safe and healthy.

### **ACL stand down**

The Union has been notified by Australian Clinical Labs that it is giving members an option to take accrued leave and will use standing down due to what management is reporting as being a significant downturn in business.

Members have been sent an email outlining the Union's initial response with a teleconference organised to discuss the situation with ACL members. There are a number of details the Union is still unclear about and are working through them.

Queries should be directed to [enquiries@msav.org.au](mailto:enquiries@msav.org.au)

### **IVF**

The Union has been receiving lots of questions from members in IVF practices regarding stand downs, and loss of entitlements if IVF businesses fail among a range of other questions given the current situation.

In the worst-case scenario, the federal government has a 'fair entitlements guarantee' which will pay out, as a last resort, unpaid annual and long service leave and redundancy pay if relevant.

There is a cap on weekly salary of \$2451 as at August 2019 – see [here](#). Note that superannuation payments are not covered. The Union is not sure what the implications are for your Workcover entitlements if your hours of work are reduced to a member on Workcover.

### **Carer's Leave**

The Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association has sent out advice to Health Services without consulting the Union, which now says if a child of a health worker can attend a Victorian Department of Education Care and Supervision Program then the parent won't get paid carer's leave if you care for your children at home.

This is wrong and frankly unjust given the dire public health emergency we are facing. Parents need to be able to choose whether to keep their children out of school.

The Union is vigorously contesting the advice given by the VHIA.

## **Paid Special Leave: Protecting all workers during the COVID-19 outbreak**

Australian workers are facing extreme uncertainty and financial stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Morrison Government is failing us by not guaranteeing all workers – permanent, casual and contract – two weeks paid special leave if they need to self-isolate, are sick or their workplace is shut down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is a public health emergency and we need a response that slows and contains the virus by allowing workers to self-isolate if they have symptoms. This will save lives.

You can urge Scott Morrison to [pass laws protecting all workers by signing the petition here](#).

Supporting workers and their families through this unprecedented crisis should be the Government's top priority. The Government should support businesses to pay this leave, especially small businesses.

1 in 3 workers in Australia do not have any access to paid leave. We need the Government to step in and ensure employers can fund proper leave for workers who must self-isolate due to these public health concerns. Working people in Australia are already struggling with a slowing economy and domestic spending is drying up across the nation. They shouldn't be left to fend for themselves. Not now, through this pandemic. Not ever.

The union movement stands with casual and contract workers.

[Sign the petition and let Scott Morrison know that in tough times, all Australians need a Government that will put their well-being first.](#)

## Work Shouldn't Hurt – Respect at Work

The Australian Council of Trade Unions' survey found that 2 in 3 women, and 1 in 3 men, have been subjected to sexual harassment at work. 64% told the ACTU they had witnessed sexual harassment. 40% of workers who are harassed tell no one at all about their experiences, because they fear that they will not get justice. Only 27% made a formal complaint.

We urgently need a new health and safety regulation requiring employers to proactively deal with the underlying causes of sexual harassment at work and stop it before it starts. Over 100 community organisations have signed the #Power2Prevent joint statement calling for urgent changes, including stronger health and safety laws requiring employers to tackle the underlying causes of sexual harassment at work and stop it before it starts.

**It's time to speak up and tell the Attorney-General and Minister for Women to make workplaces healthy, safe and respectful for all of us. [Click here to send them an email.](#)**

## Union Bushfire Appeal

The Union is working with the Victorian Trades Hall Council to collect a list of people who can help rebuild our communities when the bushfire threat has passed and it's safe to rebuild.

### **Bushfires – Hardship**

We understand that some members may find themselves in hardship due to bushfire related circumstances. We want to make sure that you don't have to worry about the small but important things. If you're affected by the bushfires and experiencing hardship please reach out to us and we will provide what assistance we can.

Email on [enquiry@msav.org.au](mailto:enquiry@msav.org.au) or call us on 9623 9623.

### **Sign up to help out**

If you can help build a fence, cook and serve food, handle hazardous material, drive a bus/truck or volunteer your time [please fill out this short form](#).

### **Make a donation**

Like the rest of Australia, we too are reeling from the stories coming from bushfire affected areas. Those working on the front line are telling us that they need money right now and don't need donations of goods at this time – [make a donation](#) today!

**Positions not backfilled?**

**Let us know**

# 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.

oil and gas.

And right now HESTA and First State Super (FSS), Australia's biggest health industry super funds, are investing our money in fossil fuels - coal,

Join us in asking HESTA and FSS to divest from fossil fuels at [www.healthyfutures.net.au/divest](http://www.healthyfutures.net.au/divest).

## 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: Taking the panic out of pandemic

"At one of the early Australian conferences on AIDS back in the 1980s, I was talking with a gay GP during the tea break. We had just heard from one presenter that oral sex was unlikely to transmit HIV. "What a relief," he said. "I had been thinking we were all going to die." I wasn't sure whether he meant that all gay men would already have been infected, or that giving up oral sex was a bridge too far. Perhaps it was a bit of both.

Even though an HIV test had become available by then, not many people had so far been tested. With no effective treatment available, the prevailing view in the gay community was that it was better just to assume everyone was infected. That had two effects: it meant the responsibility to practise safe sex was shared between everyone, putatively infected or not; and it built solidarity between those becoming sick and those who were still well. For the healthy, it was either just a matter of time until sickness came or "there but for the grace of god go I"; either way, there was no room for judging those with AIDS.

Pandemics seem to have a rhythm. At first, after the alarm is sounded, it all seems a far away and implausible. Then comes a phase of downplaying the risk — it won't come here, it's not so bad anyway — followed by a polarised debate about whether the official responses are too timid or too extreme (inevitably with economics as much in evidence as health). Then comes a full-on response (and however much we rationalise away the thought, "We're all going to die," it finds ways of sneaking back). Then there is adjustment, resignation and coping with the new reality. And finally come signs that the worst is over, rarely building to a crescendo but usually to a creeping sense of relief. Perhaps only in retrospect do you realise the burden has been lifted."

Read the entire article by Michael Bartos in Inside Story at: <https://insidestory.org.au/taking-the-panic-out-of-pandemic/>

## Worth Reading: How fungi's knack for networking boosts ecological recovery after bushfires

"The [unprecedented bushfires](#) that struck the east coast of Australia this summer killed an [estimated](#) one billion animals across [millions of hectares](#).

Scorched landscapes and animal corpses brought into sharp relief what climate-driven changes to wildfire mean for Australia's plants and animals.

Yet the effects of fire go much deeper, quite literally, to a vast and complex underground world that we know stunningly little about, including organisms that might be just as vulnerable to fire, and vital to Australia's ecological recovery: the fungi."

Read the entire article by Adam Frew, Andy Le Brocque, Dale Nimmo, Elonora Egidi, Jodi Price, Leanne Greenwood in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/how-fungis-knack-for-networking-boosts-ecological-recovery-after-bushfires-132587>

## Worth Reading: 'Click for urgent coronavirus update': how working from home may be exposing us to cybercrime

"Apart from the obvious health and economic impacts, the coronavirus also presents a major opportunity for cybercriminals.

As [staff across sectors](#) and [university students](#) shift to working and studying from home, large organisations are at increased risk of being targeted. With defences down, companies should go the extra mile to protect their business networks and employees at such a precarious time.

Reports suggest hackers are already exploiting remote workers, luring them into [online scams](#) masquerading as important information related to the pandemic.

On Friday, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's [Scamwatch reported](#) that since January 1 it had received 94 reports of coronavirus-related scams, and this figure could rise.

As COVID-19 causes a spike in telework, telehealth and online education, cybercriminals have fewer hurdles to jump in gaining access to networks.”

Read the entire article by Craig Valli in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/click-for-urgent-coronavirus-update-how-working-from-home-may-be-exposing-us-to-cybercrime-133778>

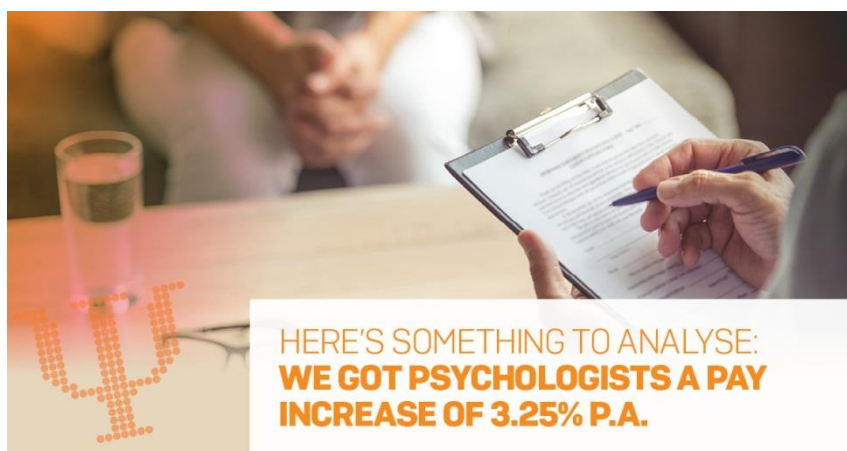
## Join the Union

**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 one of the images below on Facebook.



[Share on Facebook](#)



[Share on Facebook](#)



[Share on Facebook](#)

## 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.