



Stat Report 2021/24

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Mental health services failing Victorians

The Royal Commission found that Victoria's mental health service was failing Victorians and set out the many ways in which consumers of mental health services were being let down, and the under-investment in services – a shockingly broken system in which the abuse of the human rights of people was a regular feature.

It chronicled the excessive workloads and burnout experienced by mental health clinicians, and the problems of attracting and retaining a skilled mental health workforce, and in particular psychologists and psychiatrists. It described the workforce as being distressed by the inability to provide services to consumers.

In its 2019 Interim Report the Royal Commission recommended that the government fund an additional 60 graduate allied health, psychology and pharmacist entry level positions in public mental health services each year, to help grow the clinical workforce.

No positions were funded in 2020 or 2021.

In the 2021-2022 Budget the Victorian government only provided enough funding for 43 positions in 2022 – not the 60 positions recommended by the RC.

The government has already broken its unequivocal promise to fund all of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health Services.

Of the 43 funded graduate placement positions, 37 will be social work and occupational therapy graduates, there will be only 6 psychology Registrar positions and no pharmacist positions.

This program is one of the first to be implemented by the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Division of the Department of Health. The Division has been tasked with implementing the Recommendations of the Royal Commission, and to develop a Mental Health and Workforce Strategy by December 2021.

It's not a good start and does not bode well for the implementation of the Royal Commission's vision for an expanded and functioning public mental health services that delivers quality treatment care and support to Victorian's suffering mental illness and psychological distress. Without the required funding the recommended reforms to the mental health system will not happen.

The VPA will be taking the matter up with the Minister for Mental Health. If you have any queries, contact Dr Rosemary Kelly at rosemaryk@vicpsych.org.au

Public sector agreement bargaining is progressing. As reported to member meetings last week we are hoping to have a wages position finalised shortly and will at that stage be in a position to put a detailed agreement package to member meetings for consideration.

As always, I encourage you to raise issues you have by emailing us at enquiry@msav.org.au

In solidarity
Paul Elliott
Secretary



Positions not backfilled? Let us know

Union Round Up

Proposed changes at Monash Health - Geriatric Evaluation and Management

Monash Health appears to be expanding the GEM@Home program which could lead to additional effective full-time places. We encourage members involved in the program to get in touch with the Union with any concerns they have about the expansion of the program and its potential impact on you or your work.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Heidi at heidib@msav.org.au

St Vincent's Private Hospital Agreement

Unfortunately, the Union has not yet received an update on when the new ballot will be held. Members at St Vincent's will be notified of when the new ballot will be conducted, and we will be sure to provide members with reminders about the ballot.

Any questions should be raised with Heidi at heidib@msav.org.au

Dorevitch members – Additional week of annual leave for shift workers

Under the National Employment Standards (which are found in the Fair Work Act), every Enterprise Agreement needs to provide a definition of "shift worker" and an additional week of annual leave for workers who meet that definition.

Clause 28.3 of the Dorevitch Agreements provides this minimum entitlement.

For part-time workers, the essential elements are that:

1. The hours worked on the weekend need to be "ordinary hours" not "overtime";
2. You need to work on 10 or more "Sundays" during a yearly period; and
3. You need to work more than 4 hours on the shift.

For full-time workers, the essential elements are that:

1. You work ordinary hours on weekdays and weekends;
2. The hours worked on the weekend need to be "ordinary hours" not "overtime";
3. A weekend can include "one or two shifts", either will count as one weekend; and
4. You need to work more than 4 hours on the shift.

If you meet the above definitions, then as a shift worker you should receive an additional 38 hours of annual leave. If you are not receiving your additional annual leave, please contact Lisa for support at lisaa@msav.org.au

Underpayment of Higher Qualifications Allowance

The Union has requested that the Department of Health take the lead in coordinating an audit across all Public Health Services which are party to our Agreement.

By having a centralised approach, it will ensure that the Department rectifies mistakes across the entire state in how this entitlement is applied and correct underpayments for all current and former employees in a systematic way. The Union does expect that any process to audit the payrolls of the state's Public Health Services will take some time.

The Union is determined to ensure that this matter is resolved.

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.

VPA: Save the Date

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Victorian Psychologists Association Inc. will be held on Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 1.00 pm at the ANMF Conference Centre, 535 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

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

In case of COVID-19 lockdown, both the AGM and PD Seminar will be delivered online.

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

Health Service Furloughs

Members may have seen recent news about staff being furloughed due to outbreaks of COVID-19 in a couple of hospitals across Melbourne.

Furlough is used to help health services remain safe places to give and receive care. Being furloughed means being put on temporary leave. While any decision to furlough health service staff is up to the Chief Health Officer and their delegates, Health Services are best placed to assess the operational risk a decision to furlough staff may present.

[You can download the guidance issued by the Department of Health via our website](#)

Any outbreaks remain a major concern to the Union and highlights the significant occupational health and safety issues involved with dealing with this pandemic. It is important that members raise their concerns about their health and safety. The Union strongly encourages members to insist they have access to PPE.

If you have any concerns please contact the Union at enquiry@msav.org.au

Organise for Equality

Join us to launch a new campaign to organise and fight for working women to be Safe, Respected & Equal in all the places that we work.

We hope the date for the launch will broadly coincide with Equal Pay Day. The campaign is aiming for hundreds of people to be online to take large scale action together drawing attention to the gender pay gap.

It is also scheduled to take place just before the Federal government's summit on women's safety, scheduled for early September. Launching now gives us the opportunity to influence the discussion around women's safety at work.

Date: 26 August 2021 at 6:00pm – 7pm

RSVP: https://www.weareunion.org.au/organise_for_equality_launch

Leadership scholarships for women in the health sector

Women & Leadership Australia is offering professional development scholarships are open to women across the health sector.

[Women & Leadership Australia \(WLA\)](#) supports emerging, middle, and senior women leaders across all sectors and industries. Our career-defining leadership programs bring together a focus on applied learning with the latest in leadership theory and practice. We believe that advancing gender equity, especially in leadership, is central to creating a more fair and inclusive society.

Scholarships of \$1000-\$5000 per person are available for women in the health sector

To encourage more women to step into leadership roles across the health sector, WLA is offering scholarships for three leadership development courses.

Apply by 10 September or find out more by clicking here: <https://www.wla.edu.au/health.html>

Student Strike 4 Climate

Last week, the IPCC released their latest report. Sadly, we don't need the IPCC report to know we're in a bad situation, we're already seeing the impacts of climate change.

It's actions like our Prime Minister is taking by subsidising the expansion of fossil fuels and refusing to commit to deep emissions reductions that is denying millions of young people a safe future every day.

Since the first strikes in late 2018, thousands of young Australians have become eligible to vote. This October, young Australians are going to show the government that #TheYouthAreRising and that they'll use their voices and votes against any politician:

- who denies that we are facing the biggest crisis of all time
- who is manipulated by the corrupt fossil fuel industry
- who is actively destroying our future!

On October 15, thousands of young voters will again 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>

Contacting the Union

Here's how you can contact the Union while staff continue to work from home.

For industrial advice and assistance:

Paul Elliott | paule@msav.org.au | 0418 543 682
Rosemary Kelly | rosemaryk@msav.org.au
Matt Hammond | matth@msav.org.au | 0418 149 261
Heidi Brown | heidib@msav.org.au
Lisa Alcock | lisaa@msav.org.au
Alex Schlotzer | alexs@msav.org.au

For membership related enquiries please contact Anastasia at anastasiap@msav.org.au

For all other enquiries please send your email to 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: Should we give up on COVID-zero? Until most of us are vaccinated, we can't live with the virus

"We're currently in the midst of one of the most challenging times during the pandemic in Australia, and we're all struggling.

Frustration with the situation is at an all-time high and questions are being raised about all aspects of our response.

One of the areas that has received a great deal of attention is the "COVID-zero" approach which has defined Australia's response to the pandemic. In particular, questions have been raised about the sustainability of this strategy.

Some of this commentary has been a bit hard to make sense of, and has conflated where we've been, where we are now, and where we are heading.

Some people think we can live more freely with the virus without losing control of transmission and causing escalating numbers of infections, ICU admissions and deaths. But this is not a choice we have until enough of us are vaccinated."

Read the entire article by Hassan Vally in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/should-we-give-up-on-covid-zero-until-most-of-us-are-vaccinated-we-cant-live-with-the-virus-166269>

Worth Reading: Snorkellers discover rare, giant 400-year-old coral – one of the oldest on the Great Barrier Reef

"Snorkellers on the Great Barrier Reef have discovered a huge coral more than 400 years old which is thought to have survived 80 major cyclones, numerous coral bleaching events and centuries of exposure to other threats. We describe the discovery in research published today.

Our team surveyed the hemispherical structure, which comprises small marine animals and calcium carbonate, and found it's the Great Barrier Reef's widest coral, and one of the oldest.

It was discovered off the coast of Goolboodi (Orpheus Island), part of Queensland's Palm Island Group. Traditional custodians of the region, the Manbarra people, have called the structure Muga dhambi, meaning "big coral".

For now, Muga dhambi is in relatively good health. But climate change, declining water quality and other threats are taking a toll on the Great Barrier Reef. Scientists, Traditional Owners and others must keep a close eye on this remarkable, resilient structure to ensure it is preserved for future generations."

Read the entire article by Adam Smith, Nathan Cook and Vicki Saylor in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/snorkellers-discover-rare-giant-400-year-old-coral-one-of-the-oldest-on-the-great-barrier-reef-166278>

Worth Reading: We're all exhausted but are you experiencing burnout? Here's what to look out for

"With more than half the country in lockdown and many of the social support systems we rely on having been put on hold, it's no wonder people are feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. For some, such feelings may ultimately culminate in burnout.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, burnout was, for the most part, considered a work-related issue. But in our research, we have identified burnout in people outside of the workplace, including those who are dealing with other life stressors, such as caring for loved ones full time.

Now, because of the pandemic, rates of burnout appear to be rising, especially since working from home means workers are often required to "do more with less" and be online and available 24/7, as well as homeschool children.

We have been researching burnout to determine how to best identify and manage it. This research is outlined in a recently published book — Burnout: A guide to identifying burnout and pathways to recovery — and summarised here."

Read the entire article by Gabriela Tavella and Gordon Parker on the ABC at:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-20/burnout-symptoms-to-look-out-for/100392342>

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.