



Stat Report 2021/35

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Taking on pathology reforms in Victoria

The Victorian Government continues to proceed with planning for the reform of pathology in public hospitals.

As we've mentioned before, funding was allocated in this year's budget to improve capacity and quality in public pathology services and return outsourced hospital laboratories back to public health services.

The Union has continued discussions with senior department officials who are planning this very significant reform. We continue to advocate for issues of job security and maintenance of pay rates and conditions, including salary packaging. We have demanded that current enterprise agreement coverage must be maintained.

We have strongly advocated that the success of the proposed reforms in pathology will depend in large part on quickly returning outsourced pathology back to public hospitals, and any delays in doing this will seriously disrupt the reform process.

We fear that private pathology companies will continue to gouge public hospitals with higher prices, underperformance, understaffing and unsustainable workloads/rosters.

Right now, outsourced regional and rural laboratories in Victoria are in crisis. There are not enough scientific staff with private pathology companies unable to attract scientists because of the substandard jobs they offer. Experienced scientists are not interested in moving to regional Victoria for a position that has lower rates of pay, inferior conditions, high workloads and terrible rosters

Rosters in Regional labs require scientists to work most weekends in a month with very high levels of on-call and re-call.

The model of private pathology has failed. Putting profits ahead of pathology quality standards, contractual obligations and the welfare of their workforces has generated a crisis that is now compromising all of the elements of public pathology and in turn, public health care.

The Union will continue to strongly advocate more investment in staff is vital; and that the consolidation must be a truly state-wide approach to restoring public pathology laboratories.

There continues to be growing levels of strong support for the reforms, especially from regional and rural health services anxious to have public pathology services restored in their hospitals.

Public Sector Bargaining

We have finally received an offer for settlement of the enterprise agreement, which includes a wages offer, lump sum payments and almost all the range of matters we have spent the past 15 months negotiating.

We want to put it to members for consideration at meetings we're organising via Zoom, starting this week.

16 December at 12:30pm to 2pm - Eastern Health, Austin Health, Northern Health and Mercy Health

17 December at 12:30pm to 2pm - Alfred Health, Monash Health, Peninsula Health and Calvary Bethlehem

20 December at 12:30pm to 2pm - Royal Melbourne Hospital, Royal Women's Hospital, Royal Children's Hospital, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Western Health, St Vincent's Hospital, Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital

21 December at 12:30pm to 2pm - All Regional locations

Log in details are the same for all meetings. You can join the Zoom meeting using this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8237381571?pwd=VFR4enE1UEY3eWFqbks2YXRINnVBZz09>

Meeting ID: 823 738 1571

Passcode: NxA12B

Or dial in on 03 7018 2005

Meeting ID: 823 738 1571

Passcode: 534554

On a very pleasing note, we send our congratulations to Dr Vanessa Panettieri for her appointment as an Adjunct Associate Professor at Monash University.

This well-deserved appointment recognises Vanessa's academic achievements here and overseas, publications and teaching record, research projects, and contributions made in her role as a medical physicist at Alfred Health.

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

Positions not backfilled?

Let us know

Union Round Up

Update on Bargaining at Epworth

The Union has received an improved offer of wage increases and conditions in the EBA Bargaining negotiations for Dietitians, Psychologists and Scientists employed by Epworth Healthcare in Victoria.

We have summarised the offer below:

- A 4-year agreement (ceasing 2025)
- Wage increases:
 - 2.25% increase on wage rates in July 2022.
 - 2.25% increase on wage rates in July 2023
 - 2.4% increase on wage rates in July 2024
 - 2.4% increase on wage rates in July 2025
- A pro rata reimbursement of CPD expenses up to \$500 a year
- Superannuation on the paid portion of parental leave (NB this is required by law)
- Clarification of flex time (ie to be used for employee benefit (not in place of overtime which attracts a higher rate of pay or TOIL at penalty rates))
- Addition of year 5 to all grade 2 classifications from July 2022
- Introduction of Special Clinician Grade 4A for each classification meaning a career path not dependent on management of staff
- Introduction of Genetic Counsellor classification Grade 3 & 4 -details TBC)
- Introduction of Union rep training leave

The proposal maintains other conditions, including Higher Qualifications allowance (which was to be altered under earlier proposals put by Epworth)

These improvements are welcomed by the Union, however we understand that the agreement may not reflect member ambitions for improved Annual and Parental leave. We acknowledge that the offer does not improve particular items that were of importance to our members specifically annual leave and paid parental leave. That said we feel the offer is substantial and should be put to members to decide whether the improvements are sufficient for the next 4 years

To this end we will be asking members to exercise their judgement when the agreement is put to ballot.

- Ballot opens Tuesday 7 December - 7am
- Ballot closes Tuesday 14 December - 12pm (midday)

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

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

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.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

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.

There are lots of questions about the COVID-19 vaccines and no doubt you're getting some friends and family asking you about them because you work in the health system. Sometimes you might not have all the answers.

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.](#)

As a Union we support science and the science that stands behind vaccines; as such we believe that to protect yourself, your colleagues, your patients and your family and friends, it's vital to get vaccinated as soon 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

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: Like most of the fashion industry, there's a blind spot in Country Road's ethical focus

"Amid the catwalk shows and millinery workshops, a key theme of this year's Melbourne Fashion Week was sustainability, "offering designers with strong ethical foundations an opportunity to join our runways, or opening up dialogue on sustainability into our talks program".

Events during the week included industry representatives discussing "shifting the status quo" and moving "beyond greenwashing". On the panel at the latter event was Eloise Bishop, head of sustainability at Country Road Group, one of Australia's largest specialty fashion retailers.

Meanwhile workers from the company were on strike, chaining themselves together and staging other protests outside Country Road stores in pursuit of better wages and working conditions.

Among the complaints of these workers, mostly women from the company's distribution warehouse in Melbourne's west, was being paid an average of A\$23 an hour, compared to about A\$30 for workers doing similar work at the Pacific Brands warehouse across the road."

Read the entire article by Harriette Richards and Lauren Kate Kelly in The Conversation at:

<https://theconversation.com/like-most-of-the-fashion-industry-theres-a-blind-spot-in-country-roads-ethical-focus-172295>

Worth Reading: The massive contradiction in the Morrison government's net-zero plan

"Buried in the Morrison government's net-zero modelling is the policy that dare not speak its name: a carbon tax. Or a carbon price as Julia Gillard described it, or a 'tax arrangement' in the words of those who wrote up Morrison's modelling.

Whatever you call it, the Morrison government is using economic modelling based on the efficiency and effectiveness of a carbon price to prove that – you guessed it – Australia can get to net zero without a carbon price.

Despite the strategic timing of its release, a number of big flaws in the model have already been identified. The most egregious is that Australia's plan for net zero doesn't actually reach net zero.

It assumes the world will still be buying huge amount of gas and coal from Australia in 2050 and it relies on imaginary emissions reduction technologies being invented 'very soon'."

Read the entire article by Richard Denniss in The New Daily at: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/finance-news/2021/11/17/richard-denniss-net-zero-plan/>

Worth Reading: The 'disappearance' of tennis player Peng Shuai is a reminder that China is a fragile superpower

"How can a nation so powerful, so demanding of respect, and so quick to intimidate others be apparently so afraid of a female tennis player?"

The "disappearance" of Peng Shuai tells us so much about the Chinese Communist Party and its Achilles heel. I write "disappearance" because we just don't know.

That's the point: "truth" is hard to find in China. There is no freedom of expression, no free and open media, no rule of law as we understand it. The Communist Party determines what "truth" is.

What we do know is that Peng published an anguished post about her relationship with former Chinese vice-premier, Zhang Gaoli. Detailing their decade-long affair, she accused the senior official — 40 years older than her — of forcing her to have sex.

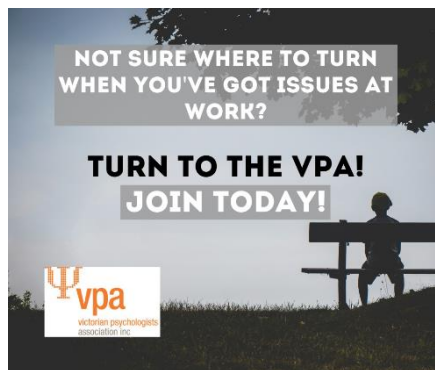
Then the tennis star went quiet. The post was removed. Her fellow tennis players and world tennis officials demanded proof of her safety."

Read the entire article by Stan Grant on the ABC at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-24/disappearance-tennis-player-peng-shuai-china-fragile-superpower/100642532>

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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