



Stat Report 2022/07

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Formaldehyde safety exposed

After 8 years of work examining exposure to formaldehyde and safety associated with exposure to formaldehyde, Safe Work Australia has released a report recommending that the allowable concentration of formaldehyde be dropped from 1 part per million to 0.1 part/s per million.

As many members would be aware, anatomical and histology pathology scientists regularly work with formaldehyde in the course of doing cut up and dissection of tissue samples.

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia and Pathology Australia have opposed lowering the allowable concentration levels of formaldehyde because they say this will reduce the efficacy of results relating to cancer diagnosis and diagnosis of a range of tissue diseases. Further, the RCPA argues there are no adverse outcomes for scientists exposed to the existing allowable concentration of 1 part per million.

In effect the RCPA and Pathology Australia argue there are no adverse impacts for people working with a known hazardous substance. Yet they haven't consulted with any scientists working in anatomical or histological pathology laboratories or consulted with the Union about their claims.

The Union is also very aware of the importance of formaldehyde in the process of diagnosing cancers and other tissue diseases. The Union, like the RCPA and Pathology Australia, does not want to see the important work our members do being jeopardized or see pathology laboratories closed because of Safe Work Australia's proposed lowering of the allowable concentration of formaldehyde.

Given Safe Work Australia's decided there is an identifiable hazard in the use of and exposure to formaldehyde, hazard reduction needs to be the primary aim rather than simply continuing to use a known hazardous substance.

The Union believes that in addition to the question of lowering the concentration of formaldehyde, more work needs to be done to address safety issues highlighted by the work conducted by Safe Work Australia; for example, upgraded and improved ventilation within pathology laboratories and/or investigating and examining alternative chemicals for tissue cut up and dissection.

Scientists working in cut-up areas in pathology labs face the risk of any harmful effects of formaldehyde exposure. Resolution of this issue must ensure that their health and safety is guaranteed above all other considerations.

We would like feedback on this issue from members across health services, so please let us know your thoughts and experiences as soon as possible.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind members that Monday was the Labour Day public holiday.

If you worked over the public holiday, thank you for making sure Victorians could keep accessing world-class health care as the pandemic continues to unfold. To those who didn't work on the public holiday, I hope you had a wonderful day off and were able to spend quality time with family and friends.

Members will find information about public holiday pay in this edition of *STAT Report*.

Bargaining for scientists at Monash IVF continues and scientist members should have received an email asking you to undertake a survey to help the Union continue with negotiations. Details can be found in *Union Round Up*.

Finally, please make sure you contact us to report workplace issues 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

Monash IVF Scientists Bargaining Update

The MSAV has continued to meet with Monash IVF to represent scientists in bargaining.

We are happy to share that Monash IVF has accepted our claim to insert a workload provision into the new Agreement. Among other requirements and new entitlements, this clause provides that Monash IVF must be “sufficiently staffed and resourced” to enable workers to perform their role in ordinary hours, to take meals breaks and leave. This is a really good achievement!

We expect a response to these claims at our next bargaining meeting in early April. We will also be negotiating wage increases at our next meeting. We have already rejected the current offer.

Members should have received a survey, asking for your feedback. If you haven't, please contact us so we can make sure you are receiving our emails.

You can take the survey by visiting: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8BW75QW>

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa at lisaa@msav.org.au

Monash Pharmacy Roster Changes

It has come to the Union's attention that there have been changes to rosters for pharmacists at Monash with less than 7 days notice.

Apparently, Monash Health is claiming that the change of rosters is as a result of an emergency but in some cases, members got more notice (3-4 days) which suggests it wasn't an emergency scenario and therefore they should pay change of change-of-roster allowance.

The Union is seeking information from pharmacists at Monash who had rosters changed with less than 7 days' notice during the Code Brown. In particular, the Union wants to know; did shifts get changed and how much notice was received and whether the change-of-roster allowance was paid.

Please send information to 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.

International Women's Day 2022

Last week we celebrated International Women's Day. It's a day to celebrate women and their achievements and contributions to our world.

We hit the streets and joined the march in large numbers to demand action and to break the bias we know exists.







Public Holiday Pay

Monday was the Labour Day public holiday. With a public holiday comes, public holiday pay.

We certainly hope that health services can ensure members are paid correctly, unlike the ongoing situation for some members who were not paid correctly for the public holidays over the Christmas and New Year period.

Here's how your public holiday pay should be calculated:

For time worked on a public holiday occurring on a weekday, the pay rate is 200% of the normal rate. For time worked on public holidays on a weekend day, the rate is 250% of normal pay. For casuals, the loading is paid on top of these rates.

For days not worked, it gets a bit more complex.

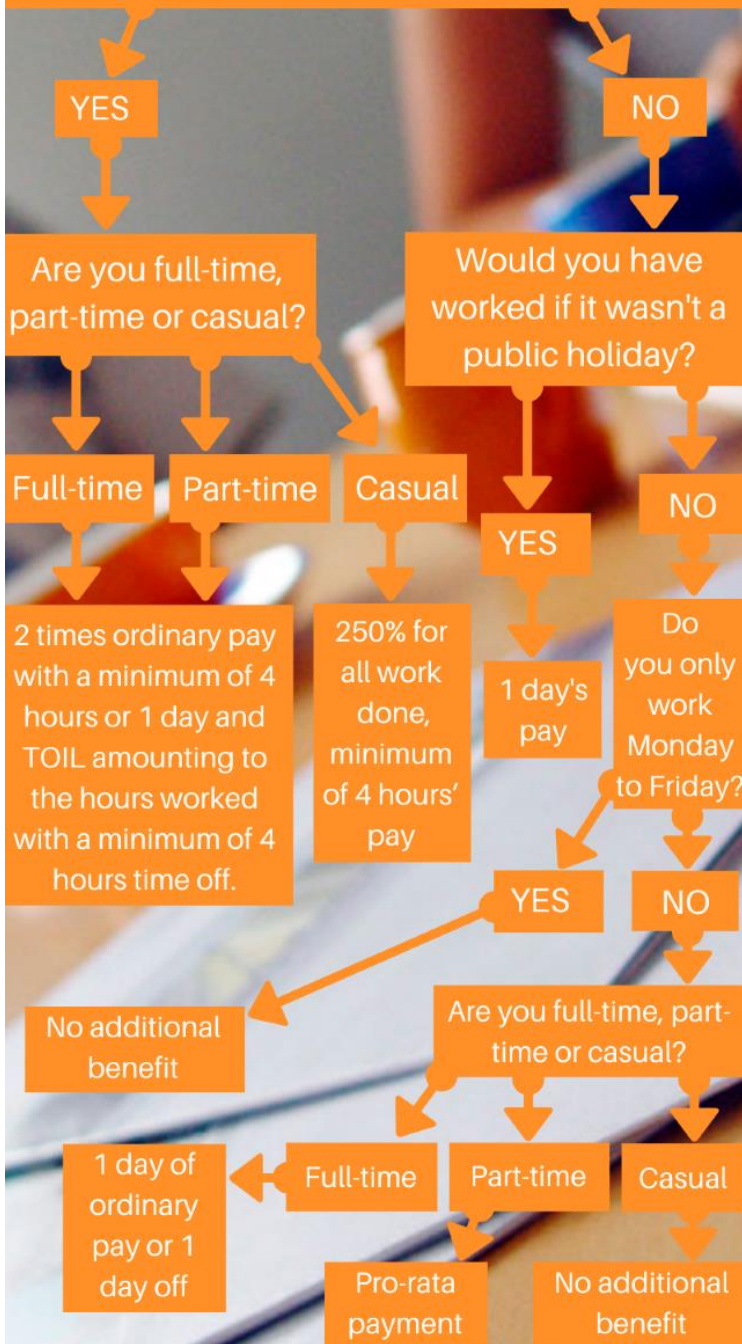
- Full-timers and part-timers who only work Monday-Friday get no benefit for a public holiday on a Saturday or Sunday.
- Full-timers and part-timers who only work Monday-Friday get a normal day's pay for a public holiday on a weekday that they would normally work.
- Full-timers who work the roster and have an RDO on a public holiday receive an additional day's pay or a day in lieu (your choice)
- Part-timers who work weekends get pro-rata pay according to the formula in the table for public holidays occurring on a day which they would not normally work.
- Part-timers who work **weekdays only** get pro-rata pay for weekday public holidays occurring on a day which they would not normally work
- Casuals receive no payment for not working on public holidays.

The flow chart below provides a visual representation.

While this mostly applies to members working in the Public Sector, 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 2022 Payments

Did you work that day?



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.

We also strongly support members getting their booster shot as soon as possible.

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: Oh, what a lovely war: Morrison's strutting on national security is sure to carry a cost

"As Scott Morrison's war talk speech to the Lowy Institute on Monday made clear, the Prime Minister wants a May election framed around national security.

Much of it was (to use a phrase from US political consultant Mike Murphy) crafted by that great speechwriting team Cut & Paste, some was overcooked hyperbole and the rest was a reheated gumbo of old Morrison themes.

He refashioned the "axis of evil" line used by former Republican President George W Bush in the 2002 State of the Union speech aimed at comparing the Axis Powers of World War II (Germany and Japan) with a modern-day alliance forming the fabled "green crescent" from Iran, through Iraq and Syria to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Gaza."

Read the entire article by Dennis Atkins in The New Daily at:
<https://thenewdaily.com.au/opinion/2022/03/09/morrisons-national-security-cost/>

Worth Reading: First come floods, then domestic violence. We need to prepare for the next inevitable crisis

"Catastrophic flooding in New South Wales and southeast Queensland has led to lost lives, homes, belongings, pets and livelihoods.

As the process of cleaning up after the floods continues, we can expect an often unspoken outcome of natural disasters.

Domestic violence rates surge during and after bushfires, pandemics, earthquakes, cyclones and floods."

Read the entire article by Kim Usher in The Conversation at: <https://theconversation.com/first-come-floods-then-domestic-violence-we-need-to-prepare-for-the-next-inevitable-crisis-178607>

Worth Reading: Wellness is not women's friend. It's a distraction from what really ails us

"Wellness is mainly marketed to women. We're encouraged to eat clean, take personal responsibility for our well-being, happiness and life. These are the hallmarks of a strong, independent woman in 2022.

But on the eve of International Women's Day, let's look closer at this neoliberal feminist notion of wellness and personal responsibility – the idea women's health and well-being depends on our individual choices.

We argue wellness is not concerned with actual well-being, whatever wellness "guru" and businesswoman Gwyneth Paltrow suggests, or influencers say on Instagram."

Read the entire article by Kate Seers and Rachel Hogg in The Conversation at:

<https://theconversation.com/wellness-is-not-womens-friend-its-a-distraction-from-what-really-ails-us-177446>

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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