Mental Health EBA Update No 63 - 27 April 2012

Victorian Public Sector Nurses, Midwives and Mental Health Nurses

It’s time for senior Government representatives to come to the table

Mental health members met yesterday afternoon to receive a report from Lisa Fitzpatrick on progress of the public sector mental health EBA conciliation proceedings. At the meeting members passed a resolution to continue progressing ANF claims through conciliation which has been taking place since 27 March 2012 with the assistance of Commissioner Anne Gooley. Members also resolved to continue taking protected industrial action in those workplaces where the protected action ballot was successful.

FWA proceedings

Conciliation proceedings between ANF, HACSU, the VHIA and Baillieu Government representatives reconvened before Fair Work Commissioner Gooley on April 16 and have continued over the past two weeks.

Members will be aware the Department of Health, Baillieu Government officials and the Victorian Hospitals’ Industrial Association (VHIA) provided a preliminary position in relation to ANF’s and HACSU’s claims on Friday 20 April 2012. This document has formed the basis of ongoing discussions.

ANF has evaluated the VHIA and Baillieu Government’s preliminary position and parties are now in the process of clarifying details in conciliation proceedings. This process requires all parties to examine each clause in the agreement and work towards a point of agreement.

Discussions are progressing on particular clauses within the draft position; however, there are still significant areas of concern and, as was the case during the public sector nurses’ and midwives’ negotiations, talks require the involvement of more senior Government representatives.

Negotiations recommence on Monday 30 April at 9.30am and are also scheduled for Tuesday 1 May and Thursday 3 May.
Safe workload management and staffing levels

Discussions are continuing in relation to a nurse staffing profile, particularly noting the high need areas such as HDU and night duty staffing levels. ANF, VHIA and HACSU acknowledge the significant workload issues in high dependency units, particularly on night duty, and the need for increased staffing. However, at this stage there is no offer from government to fix these workload issues.

The VHIA and Government continue to request trials in workload measurement and modelling in community mental health. ANF and HACSU reject this and believe trials are unnecessary, wasting time and resources. There is already a comprehensive and collaborative trial relating to a community workload management tool in progress, which has resulted in the development of appropriate workload management programs. Community mental health nurses need better workload tools now, that will enable workloads to be addressed.

Baillieu Government representatives continue to raise the need for increased workforce flexibility however ANF argues there is no base or starting point for flexibility to be measured against as there are no minimum mandated staffing profiles or programs in mental health.

Substitution, split shifts and short shifts

VHIA and Government representatives have withdrawn their claim for split shifts, however continue to seek short shifts of 4, 5, or 6 hours.

In addition, they remain committed to redeploying staff throughout workplaces and programs. Both ANF and HACSU continue to reject this claim.

Enrolled nurses’ career structure

There has been some positive progress relating to the development of a new career structure for enrolled nurses in mental health. Importantly, an associated pay rate schedule has not been tabled by Government or VHIA.

Pay rates/CPD allowance

ANF is working toward an outcome for mental health that reflects the public sector nurses’ and midwives’ outcome, a combination of a pay rise and the CPD allowance. Positive progress is taking place on this issue with respect to nurses, however the Mental Health Agreement also applies to others working in mental health services.
Support for mental health nurses

It is important ANF (Vic Branch) members continue to support mental health nurses as they fight to achieve a fair outcome that protects mental health clients in hospitals and in the community. There are many things ANF members, family and friends can do to support public sector mental health nurses.

You can help by:

1. **Wearing the red T-shirt** - It’s a conversation starter. Let people know nurses are still fighting to protect the care of mental health patients.

2. **Signing our online petition** to Premier Baillieu to fund more mental health nurses and share the link www.tiny.cc/anfpetition with your colleagues, friends and family.

3. **Letterbox drop your neighbourhood** - Ask your ANF Organiser for the mental health nurses’ campaign flier or collect a bundle from the ANF office.

4. **Write to Premier Ted Baillieu** - Tell Mr Baillieu to introduce safe patient workloads in mental health services:
   Premier Ted Baillieu,
   Hawthorn Electoral Office,
   325 Camberwell Road,
   Camberwell 3124 or
   email ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au

5. **Contact your local State Member of Parliament** - Ask for their support to introduce safe workloads in mental health.

6. **Write a letter to the editor** - Tell them why you believe mental health services require mental health nurses. **The Herald Sun**: Letters to the Editor, PO Box 14631, Melbourne Vic 8001 or email hsletters@heraldsun.com.au

   **The Age**: Letters Editor, PO Box 257, Melbourne Vic 3001 or email letters@theage.com.au or your local papers

7. **Call talkback radio** - **3AW 693** on 9690 0693 or outside Melbourne 13 13 32
   **ABC 774** on 1300 222 774 or SMS 0437 774 774

8. **Voice your support** - Talk about the campaign on www.facebook.com/respectourwork or if you don’t use Facebook you can post comments on the campaign website www.respectourwork.com.au

9. **Follow us** and voice your support on Twitter @ANFvicbranch

Respect our work campaign www.tiny.cc/eba2011

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