



NATIONAL AGED CARE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Briefing Pack – Aged Care Workers

20/08/2020

The National Aged Care Emergency Response (NACER) is an initiative of the Commonwealth Department of Health and the Australian aged care industry. NACER will organise staff – from areas outside of Victoria that don't have community transmission of COVID-19 – to help care for people in aged care services with confirmed COVID-19 cases in Victoria.

Aged care services in Victoria are experiencing large numbers of COVID-19 cases among residents and staff. They are struggling to provide adequate care and it could get worse. They urgently need workers from other states to protect the health of the older Australians in Victorian services.

We are seeking experienced Registered Nurses, Enrolled Nurses, Personal Care Workers and Cleaners who are not from a COVID-19 vulnerable group. Staff should be endorsed by their employer as having the necessary qualifications, skills, experience and ability to cope under pressure and in confronting environments.

Interested staff will need to:

- have a current national police check (consistent with the requirements - including the recording and system requirements - in the Accountability Principles 2014 made pursuant to the *Aged Care Act 1997*)
- have a current influenza vaccination
- demonstrate appropriate and current competencies, qualifications and knowledge, to effectively perform their roles as required by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) where appropriate
- a Victorian worker's permit (the Commonwealth Department of Health will help arrange this)
- have not recently undertaken overseas travel or had any known contact with COVID-19 which would preclude their deployment (or, if they have, they may be asked to isolate in advance of commencing their deployment).

Ideally, you will be sent in a team of six people to aged care services for four weeks, followed by two weeks of quarantine which will take place following your return to your home state.

Your safety is the number one priority for us. You need to complete the required Infection Prevention and Control training prior to deployment, particularly training on donning and doffing PPE.

As part of a full support structure, you will be provided with:

- uniforms and PPE
- regular COVID-19 tests during deployment
- access to mental health support on the ground.

The service you will be working at will have or have had confirmed cases of COVID-19. Despite these protections above, there is a risk you could be infected with COVID-19.

You will be provided with accommodation near the service where you will be working, and daily transport to and from work. You will be subject to Victorian Stage 4 restrictions. Appropriate action will be taken if staff are found to be in breach of restrictions or their employer's Code of Conduct.

If you choose to take part in the program, it is intended that you will be employed by Healthcare Australia Pty Limited (HCA) for the time you're in Victoria and in quarantine. You will need to take leave without pay from your current employer. HCA will be paid by the Commonwealth Government to provide to you the following package:

- your casual rate based on your current employment arrangements and any applicable loading including for weekends, time of day and public holidays
- a \$5,000 incentive payment on satisfactory completion of your deployment
- all reasonable interstate travel and accommodation
- all reasonable medical, accommodation and food expenses in the event you become ill during your deployment
- a tax-free travel allowance of \$128.70 per day for the period of deployment and during your quarantine period after the deployment
- your casual rate for a standard fortnight during quarantine
- 9.5% superannuation
- full work cover
- professional/medical indemnity insurance
- payment weekly.

A dedicated coordinator in Melbourne will support you. They will make sure PPE, pastoral and mental health care arrangements are in place. You can also talk to them if you have any concerns, including any problems with the service where you're working.

There will be a single point of contact in the NACER Melbourne Liaison for participating staff and their existing employer.

FAQs

QUESTION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

What roles are needed?

We urgently need personal care workers (PCW), registered nurses (RNs) and enrolled nurses (ENs), and cleaners to support aged care residents in Melbourne’s COVID hot spots.

Staff should be endorsed by their employer as having the necessary qualifications, skills, experience and ability to cope under pressure and in confronting environments.

Ideally, we need teams of six including one RN, one EN, three PCWs and one cleaner.

Who has organised the program?

The Commonwealth Department of Health has organised this critical national program with the aged care industry. The Department is working with aged care providers to identify teams for deployment.

TIMING

How long will I be in Melbourne?

You will be sent to Melbourne for four weeks and then go into quarantine for two weeks when you get home.

How soon can I go to Melbourne?

We need experienced aged care workers in COVID-19 affected services in Melbourne as soon as possible. We’re working through how to make that happen. If you’re interested and have your manager’s approval, you could be leaving within days.

As the National Aged Care Emergency Response Liaison is stood up, we hope we can give more notice.

Can I do a second deployment?

For your own health and wellbeing, after your period of deployment and two weeks in quarantine, you must return home. Whether you can go on another deployment will be considered on a case by case basis with your employer.

QUESTION

DEPLOYMENT

Who is managing the deployment?

The National Aged Care Emergency Response (NACER) Liaison is being managed with the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC).

The NACER Melbourne Coordinator will support you on the ground.

The NACER Melbourne Coordinator will be the liaison between you and the VACRC, and will organise: your initial deployment; managing logistics including PPE; and pastoral and psychological care. You can also talk to them about any concerns you may have, including and problems with the service where you're working.

Each aged care service (through their Critical Incident Responder) will be responsible for the day-to-day management of their service. They will give you your orientation and any required training.

Can a group of us be sent as a team?

While we will try to keep teams together, we can't guarantee it.

Will I be working at a single service or multiple services?

We will endeavour to keep you at one service. In most cases, deployment will be four weeks at a single aged care service. However, you need to be prepared to work across more than one during your period of deployment.

What shifts should I expect?

You may need to work a mixture of early morning, morning, evening and night shifts on a 24-hour model of care. Shift times will vary.

Who will I be working with?

It's too early to tell. We are aiming to keep you within your deployment team, but you may meet your team at your home airport, on the way to your temporary workplace, or on your first day.

Can I choose who I will work with?

People who work together now are encouraged to apply as a group. However, we need to balance those requests with the needs of the Victorian services, and where people are most needed.

Can I choose which service I will be working in?

Unfortunately not. You will be sent to the service most in need. The [Victorian Aged Care Response Centre](#) will decide where you will be sent.

QUESTION

I'm travelling with a group of colleagues. Can we get together outside of working hours?

Unfortunately not. You must follow the Victorian Government's [directions and guidelines](#) in response to COVID-19. We will provide more information to you on these guidelines once you are on the ground.

Does the lockdown/curfew in Melbourne apply to me?

Yes. You can only travel to and from work, but you must follow the Victorian Government's [directions and guidelines](#) in response to COVID-19. Appropriate action will be taken if a staff member is found to be in breach of restrictions.

What do I need to bring?

Uniforms and PPE will be delivered to where you're staying. Laundry services will be available at your accommodation.

Prepare for Melbourne's weather and bring warm clothes.

Activities are limited by the Victorian Government's COVID-19 restrictions. We suggest you bring some things to keep yourself occupied when you're not at work.

Can I visit my friends / family in Melbourne?

Unfortunately not. You have to follow the Victorian Government's Stage 4 [restrictions](#).

Will I be able to contact my family from Melbourne?

You can contact your family when you aren't at work but, because of COVID-19 restrictions, you can't visit them.

Will I be able to do activities outside of working hours in Melbourne?

Activities are limited by the Victorian Government's COVID-19 restrictions. You have to follow the Victorian Government's Stage 4 [restrictions](#).

Can I tell people where I am working and what I am doing?

Yes, you can tell people that you are working on the Government's response to COVID-19, but remember you can't reveal any Personal Information about care recipients or your co-workers, and you have an overriding obligation of confidentiality. We have prepared a guide in case you are approached by the media.

Can I stay longer in Melbourne after I finish working?

No. For your own health and wellbeing, you must undertake two weeks in quarantine once you get back to your home state. Whether you can go on a second deployment will be considered on a case-by-case basis with your employer.

QUESTION

How many days off will I have?

This will depend on the roster at the service where you're working.

Who will I report to at the service where I am working?

Each service (through their Critical Incident Responder) has its own day-to-day management, including new staff orientation.

The NACER Melbourne Coordinator will support you on the ground.

They will be the liaison between you and the VACRC, and are responsible for: your initial deployment; managing logistics including PPE; and pastoral and psychological care. You can also talk to them about any concerns you may have, including and problems with the service where you're working.

How do I find out what service I will be working in?

Needs in Melbourne are constantly changing. The [Victorian Aged Care Response Centre](#) will decide where you will be working closer to when you leave.

ENTITLEMENTS & EXPENSES

What will I get paid?

You will receive your current rate which will be casualised or increased to acknowledge leave you would otherwise be accruing. If you are already casual, your rate will remain the same.

We will also give you a \$5,000 incentive payment, and a travel allowance of \$128.70 per day. You'll get your incentive payment following the successful completion of your deployment in Melbourne.

You will also be paid for your time in quarantine. Your salary for the quarantine period will be based on your current rates for a 38 hour week or your average weekly wage, whichever is greater. The Commonwealth Government will cover the costs of your quarantine.

Does my pay include superannuation?

You will keep receiving superannuation contributions based on your wages.

QUESTION

Will I remain employed under my existing employer?

Healthcare Australia (HCA) Pty Limited will employ you for time you're in Melbourne and in quarantine. This will have no impact on your existing employment arrangements. You will take leave without pay from your current employment while you're in Melbourne and in quarantine and resume that employment after the quarantine.

Who pays for my travel and accommodation?

The Commonwealth Government will provide funding to HCA to cover all of your reasonable travel and accommodation costs and give you a daily allowance.

Will I receive a daily living allowance?

We will pay you a travel allowance of \$128.70 per day while you're in Melbourne and in quarantine. You'll get your first week in advance at the start of your deployment.

If I complete multiple deployments, am I entitled to multiple incentive payments?

Yes, the incentive payment is paid for each deployment, including four weeks onsite and a two-week quarantine period.

Your manager has to approve your participation in any deployment. There may be other factors, considered on a case-by-case basis, to assess your suitability for multiple deployments.

If I can only complete part of my deployment, will I still receive the incentive?

The incentive may be paid on a case by case, pro rata basis to reflect the time you spent on deployment. This will be dependent on why you did not complete your deployment.

Will I go back into my old job when I return from Melbourne?

Yes. You will need to take leave without pay from your current role to go to Melbourne. You can go back to your normal job when you finish the two week quarantine period.

Who will pay my rent and bills at home while I'm in Melbourne?

In addition to your usual award wages, we will give you a \$5,000 incentive payment, and a travel allowance of \$128.70 per day. You will continue to be responsible for paying your usual bills.

QUESTION**HEALTH & SAFETY**

What protection will I have in Melbourne?

We are taking reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including:

- providing uniforms and PPE
- comfortable and safe accommodation
- strict laundry and cleaning rules
- dedicated transport to and from your service, accommodation and the airport, and
- regular COVID-19 testing during deployment.

You will also have access to mental health support during your deployment and quarantine and post deployment you can choose to have your information handed over to your own employment assistance program.

Despite these protections, there is a risk you could be infected with COVID-19.

What happens if I contract COVID-19 in Melbourne?

We will take reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We will be guided by the local health authorities and public health units should you contract COVID-19.

We will consider getting you back home on a case-by-case basis, once you have been cleared of COVID-19.

Will I be provided with a uniform and PPE?

Yes. We will provide you with uniforms and all appropriate PPE. However, you will need your own PPE (i.e. face mask) on your flight to Melbourne and until you arrive at your accommodation.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services regularly updates its PPE regulations. You must follow these requirements.

Will I be tested for COVID-19?

Yes, you will be tested regularly while you're in Melbourne.

QUESTION

What happens if I don't complete my four weeks and want/need to leave early?

If you need to finish before your four weeks is up, you still need to quarantine, as per your home state regulations. The Commonwealth Department of Health will pay for your quarantine. Your incentive payment will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be paid pro rata. This will be dependent on the reason why you did not complete your deployment.

If your employer recalls you, you must still complete your state or territory's required quarantine regulations. Your incentive payment will be paid on a pro rata basis.

What support will be available to me in Melbourne? And on my return, who do I contact for support?

Your health and wellbeing is our key priority. We will support you when you're in Melbourne and when you get home, both physically and mentally.

We will provide chaplaincy and mental health support through an Employee Assistance Program.

You will get face-to-face training in infection control and donning and doffing PPE.

When you get home, we will continue to provide support and give a handover to your employer's Employee Assistance Program.

How bad is it in Melbourne? What is the situation I will find in my service?

The impact of COVID-19 on Melbourne's aged care services is critical. Your help, support and aged care experience during this Emergency Response is crucial and will be much appreciated. The service you will be working at will have or have had confirmed case/s of COVID-19.

ACCOMMODATION & CATERING

Where will I be staying in Melbourne?

Your hotel may be a reasonable travelling distance from where you will be working. We will provide transport to and from work.

The National Aged Care Emergency Response Liaison will book the hotel. Strict laundry and cleaning rules will be in place. We will make every effort to make sure you're safe and won't be exposed to infection.

Can I stay with friends / family in Melbourne?

Unfortunately not. To reduce the spread of transmission, you must stay in the accommodation provided.

QUESTION

What services will be available where I'm staying in Melbourne?

We are finalising accommodation arrangements and you will find out closer to when you go to Melbourne.
Normal services might not be available because of COVID-19 restrictions.

TRANSPORT & TRAVEL

How will I get to Melbourne?

Getting from your home to your closest airport will depend on where you live. You will travel to Melbourne by plane. We will discuss any arrangements with you before we finalise them.

How will I travel to and from work?

We will provide dedicated transport to and from your work, accommodation and Melbourne airport.

APPROVALS, EXPERIENCE & TRAINING

What training / qualifications do I need?

We need experienced personal care workers, registered and enrolled nurses, and cleaners currently working in aged care services who are trained in infection control. They can't be from a COVID-19 vulnerable group.
You will need to comply with the personal requirements set out in the Overview and be endorsed by your employer.
Experience in residential aged care preferable but not a requirement.

What infection prevention training do I have to have?

You have to complete the Commonwealth's [Infection Prevention and Control training](#), particularly donning and doffing PPE.

Do I need approval from my employer?

Yes, you need your employer's approval.
If you work via an agency or you're self-employed, e.g. through Better Caring, contact the National Aged Care Emergency Response Liaison by emailing nacer@health.gov.au.

QUESTION

QUARANTINE

Will I have to quarantine when I return to my state? Yes, as per current state and territory government regulations, you must quarantine in a hotel for two weeks. The costs of quarantine will be paid for you.

Where will I be quarantining on my return from Melbourne? Current state and territory government regulations require you to quarantine in a hotel in your home state. These regulations are regularly reviewed and may change.

Who covers the cost of quarantining in a hotel? The Commonwealth Department of Health will pay for your hotel. If you're from Western Australia, your Melbourne employer will pay for quarantine.
You will also receive your casual rate for 38 hours per week and a daily allowance during quarantine.

MORE INFORMATION

Who do I talk to about getting involved? If you're interested, please talk to your local manager.

How do I find out more about the program? You can email nacer@health.gov.au to ask for more information.