

# Another Update on COVID-19

Further information on various COVID-19 and related matters.

## RISK MITIGATION

- As one would expect, from an early stage, experience and research have shown that nurses are at high risk of COVID-19 infection through occupational exposure. Nurses are well-represented in all the statistics on COVID-19 morbidity and mortality across all jurisdictions including all the hotspots. We have been following this since early January.
- As previously advised, employers have legally binding health and safety obligations to mitigate risk.
- The availability of PPE and appropriate protocols remain important for risk mitigation.
- Can improvised PPE be used? Conventionally the advice is no, it is not consistent with best practice. However, some hospitals in the USA are resorting to improvised PPE, as stocks are depleted.
- Several retrospective studies have identified some risk factors for healthcare workers and nosocomial transmission. A recently published retrospective study of healthcare workers infected with COVID-19 in Wuhan showed, working “**longer duty hours and suboptimal hand hygiene**” after contact with patients were clearly linked to COVID-19 infection among medical and nursing personnel. Authors of that recommend that where possible shifts should be a maximum of 10 hours.

## NSNZ SERVICES

- Most members will be aware that we operate seven days a week and are generally open about 16 hours a day. Contact is also available 24/7.
- Our systems are such that if it becomes necessary, we can fully operate with all of our team working from home, without any adverse impact on services, save that we would not have face-to-face meetings in our office. Skype is always an option. We are fully set up for that with UHD.
- How we represent members in professional and employment-related disciplinary processes and formal hearings, and suchlike, may be a challenge. We have some members with scheduled formal proceedings. None of these proceedings have been deferred at this stage, but deferral is a real possibility.

## **RESPONSE TIMES & WORKLOAD**

- At the best of times we have a very heavy workload. There is some extra pressure on our services at present and, as such, our response times for non-urgent matters are truncated.
- Some scheduled mahi has been temporarily postponed. This includes some collective employment agreement claims. Aside from needing to deal with more urgent matters from members, it is clearly not the best time to submit or advance such claims.

## **MEMBERSHIP FEES**

- Our membership fees are modest. However, on request (by email) we will waive fees for any member on COVID-19 sick leave or self-isolation for the duration of such leave.
- Our membership fees have not increased for six years and there are no current plans for an increase.

## **DYNAMIC SITUATION**

- As this is a fast-moving situation, some advice and information may change in due course.



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