

Change of Ward (CoW) & Change of Roster (CoR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Introduction

The General Nurses and Midwives Enterprise Agreement 2020-2024 includes the Change of Ward and Change of Roster allowances which nurses and midwives may be entitled to under certain circumstances.

This Factsheet outlines the definitions, eligibility and requirements for these penalties.

Definitions & Eligibility

Change of Roster (CoR) Allowance

This allowance was introduced the 2020-2024 general nurses and midwives' agreement and continues in the 2024-2028 Agreement.

It provides a penalty payment for a shift that is **changed by the employer** before the shift is worked.

There are two rates for Change of Roster Allowance;

- i) 7 days or less notice
- ii) 8 to 14 days' notice

This does NOT include shift requests or swaps initiated by the staff member, additional shifts that are picked up by the staff member through the Supplementary roster (See clause 46), or when a Change of Ward occurs (see below) unless the start/finish times of that shift are also changed.

The explanation for eligibility can be found on Page 85, clause 45.8. The rates are outlined in the Allowances section at Appendix 2, part 2.

In the 2024-2028 agreement there is a new eligibility clause for the Change of Roster allowance; that is when the rosters do not meet the required publication timeframes, the Change of Roster allowance will be payable on every shift that is late being published.

Rosters must be 28 days in duration, published 28 days in Advance. Refer to the Western Health employee-centred Roster Guidelines for more details on publication dates. See Clause 45.

Change of Ward (CoW) Allowance

The Change of Ward (CoW) allowance refers to shifts worked outside of the rostered area of work, for example to cover a shortfall in another ward or unit due to **unplanned leave**, or due to **unexpected skill mix deficits**.

The CoW allowance operates with two primary purposes:

- a) to compensate an employee for a relocation to a different ward, unit or Department (or clinical section, where this applies) and

Change of Ward (CoW) & Change of Roster (CoR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



- b) to deter employers from relocating employees to, for example, fill unplanned absences. It is not intended to apply (or deter) ordinary, expected movements between clinical sections or from their usual area of work.

The exceptions in the clause (and as set out in the examples below) illustrate this.

- Relocation may occur on commencement of a shift or during a rostered shift where, on balance, the period of relocation would constitute “a rostered shift”.
- Specifically, (a) a relocation to fill an unplanned absence is more likely to occur at the start or near the start of a rostered shift and relocations of this kind are intended to be covered by the clause, and
- (b) the entitlement is not intended to operate to delay the timing of the relocation to avoid paying the allowance on the basis it's not the entire rostered shift even though the period of relocation is such that, on balance, the Employee worked their 'rostered shift' somewhere other than their base ward.

Example scenarios

- **I am rostered to the Medical Ward but have been sent to the Aged Care ward. Am I entitled to the Change of Ward Allowance?**

Yes, if you are rostered to the Medical Ward and, on arrival, are relocated to the Aged Care Ward, the COW allowance applies (and this is the circumstance the allowance is designed to address).
- **What if I start work in the Medical Ward as rostered, but am relocated after the first hour to the Aged Care Ward to fill an unplanned absence?**

Yes, although the relocation is not the entire shift, it would be reasonable to say that the employee was relocated for the rostered shift and the COW allowance would apply.
- **Does the COW allowance apply if I am relocated to the Aged Care Ward for meal break relief?**

No, facilitating meal break relief is an ordinary, expected movement
- **Do I receive a change of ward allowance if I work overtime on a different ward?**

No, the COW allowance is only payable where a person is rostered to perform a shift in one ward but is relocated to another ward. Overtime is generally not rostered.
- **Does the change of ward allowance apply to an Educator who works across different wards of the hospital?**

No, where an Educator is working across different wards as part of their role as an Educator, the COW allowance does not apply. In the case of an Educator, this kind of movement is an ordinary, expected part of the role
- **Does the COW allowance apply where an Educator is redeployed to a ward to provide direct patient care (with an allocation of patients) including as a result of demand escalation?**

Yes. If the Educator has been redeployed from their role as Educator to being responsible for the delivery of direct patient care then the allowance is payable.
- **Do I receive the change of ward allowance if my ward is closed over the Christmas period?**

No, Generally, a Christmas closure will be planned, and reflected in the roster (and consulted on, as required). That is, the Employee would be rostered to a different ward. The COW allowance is not payable in that circumstance.
- **Does the change of ward allowance apply to me as a casual or pool employee?**

No, change of ward allowance specifically excludes casual and pool employees.

Change of Ward (CoW) & Change of Roster (CoR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



- **I work on Ward A and was asked to move to Ward B partway through my shift as someone on that ward went home sick. Do I get the change of ward allowance?**

The COW allowance applies where an employee is relocated for the rostered shift. In this example, if the relocation occurs at a time that means that the Employee had effectively been relocated for the rostered shift, **the allowance would apply**, even if it occurs part way through.

If, however, an Employee was relocated and had performed, effectively, their rostered shift in the rostered location and was relocated to another ward for part of a shift to backfill an absence, **the allowance would not be payable**. Note: This relocation should not occur if Ward A are then non-compliant with the minimum requirements of the Safe Patient Care Act 2015. Occupied beds include those available to be occupied.

- **Does the change of ward allowance apply when I cover breaks in different areas of my ward/unit?**

No. Covering meal breaks is an ordinary, expected movement and the COW allowance is not intended to apply

- **Is the change of ward allowance payable where my ward is relocated?**

No, a ward relocation would (generally) be planned and whilst the ward may be in a different location, it would usually not result in an Employee working in a ward different to the one that was rostered. That is, the allowance is directed to an employee being relocated to a different ward, not a ward being in a different location

- **What if the relocated ward was smaller and some employees were relocated to different wards as a result?**

Yes, if this results in an Employee performing the rostered shift in a ward other than the one that was rostered, the COW allowance will apply.

- **Do I receive a change of ward allowance if I arrive at work and am required to be in-charge?**

No, not if you are in-charge of the ward you were rostered to work in. However, a higher duties payment may apply.

- **What if I am relocated to be in-charge of another ward?**

Yes, if an Employee arrives at work and is required to be in-charge of a ward that is not the rostered ward, the COW allowance applies. In addition, higher duties may also apply.

- **Midwives in my unit will birth a woman, and usually then follow the woman to the postnatal area to settle her in for the first hour or so. The midwife then moves back to birthing suites and are not given a patient allocation in postnatal. Should I be paying the COW allowance?**

No. This scenario would fit in the exceptions at cl 41A.3(g).

- **I work in a large ICU which is divided into teams, each with an in charge. Although I am allocated to a team on the roster, I commonly move across teams for my shift. Does the COW allowance apply here?**

No. The clause is not intended to disrupt movement that is 'business as usual' that is an ordinary, expected part of the work in a large unit or department. In this instance, the team remains the same and the work remains the same. The entitlement is to compensate for relocation not to discourage workload arrangements or established models of care/ team approaches.

- **Does the Change of Ward allowance apply to a team-based Midwifery Continuity of Care Model?**

Whilst it will depend on the specific arrangements, many team-based Midwifery Continuity of Care Models are based on a model of care which seeks to decrease the number of Midwives a specific woman encounters during her pregnancy. If the team-based Midwifery Continuity of Care Model of care provides for Midwives to follow the woman through their journey, and that is what the midwife is doing, the exception at 41A.3(g) applies. Also note clause 107.8.

- **I am a Midwife rostered to birth suite, but I am not required in birth suite because there are no birthing women. I am redeployed to another ward in addition to the minimum staffing ratio. Would I receive the COW allowance?**

Change of Ward (CoW) & Change of Roster (CoR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



If you are redeployed for the rostered shift then the COW allowance will apply. If, however, you are redeployed for a part of a shift only, COW allowance only applies where, on balance, the period of relocation would constitute the rostered shift.

- **As part of my normal work pattern, I am rostered to work on more than one base ward. Do I receive the COW allowance if I work on a ward/department other than that which I was rostered?**

A Multi Base Ward Employee is one that is rostered to work on more than one Base Ward. A Multi Base Ward Employee does not receive a COW allowance for working on the Base Ward they were rostered to. The COW allowance would however be payable if, at the initiative of the Employer, the Employee performed their rostered shift on a ward, unit or department other than the one they were rostered to, or on a Base Ward other than that which they were rostered to.

Subclause 41a.6 – Clinical Sections

Note: This part concerns clause 41A.6 only, that is movements between clinical sections that are equivalent to a relocation between wards. The indicators detailed below are specific to clause 41A.6 to support the identification of a clinical section that is equivalent to a relocation between wards.

- **Can a change of ward allowance apply within a ward/unit?**

There are limited number of wards/units where the allowance would apply. The change of ward allowance is payable where the relocation is comparable to a change of ward having regard to the principles above but is between two readily identifiable clinical sections of a ward/unit for the rostered shift. An example of indicators that a change in clinical section has the same effect as a change of ward, may include a change in clinical context, with whom the rostered shift is performed and where the rostered shift was expected to be undertaken.

- **I work in a mixed ward, does the COW apply?**

If your mixed ward operates a single roster for example, and there are no clearly identifiable clinical sections then, no the COW allowance would not apply. If, however, your mixed ward has separate rosters for separate clinical sections and you are moved in between them for the rostered shift, or on balance, the rostered shift, the COW allowance would apply.

- **I work in ICU and during my shift I move from the ICU to Medical Imaging, as my patient requires an MRI. Does the COW allowance apply?**

No. Following a patient is an exception to the COW allowance.

- **I work in Anaesthetics and shortly after I start my shift, I am relocated from Anaesthetics to Scrub Scout to, for example, backfill an absence. Our roster clearly shows that I was to be working anaesthetics for this shift. Does the COW allowance apply?**

Yes. In this example, the clinical context has changed and the Employee is working with different people. The example is for the rostered shift.

- **I work in Anaesthetics and I am relocated to Recovery later in my shift because my anaesthetics list has finished. Does the COW allowance apply?**

No, The COW allowance does not apply here. The term is not intended to discourage relocation in these circumstances.

- **Do I receive the change of ward allowance if I work within the Emergency Department and am relocated from the general observation cubicles to the resuscitation cubicles?**

Change of Ward (CoW) & Change of Roster (CoR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



No, most Emergency Departments operate as a single team with a single in charge (there may be exceptions to this). The movement between sections does not substantially change where, with whom and the clinical context in which the work is occurring. These movements are part of the ordinary, expected operations of the ED

- **What if an Emergency Department employee was rostered to the short stay unit but then relocated to the main emergency department under a separate team at the commencement of the shift?**

The COW allowance would likely apply but would depend on the specific circumstances with an indicator being whether the short stay unit had a separate or distinct rostering arrangement.

- **Can I change how the roster is designed to remove which clinical section the Employee is rostered to?**

No, the clause specifically states that employers must not seek to circumvent this provision. If your staff are rostered to Scrub/Scout or Anaesthetics, you cannot remove this from the roster to avoid paying the allowance.

- **If the acuity of patients within my ward/department changes during the shift and my patient allocation changes as a result of a redistribution of patients to the existing staff, am I entitled to the COW allowance?**

No, the COW allowance is not payable in this circumstance. The COW allowance would however be payable where you were reallocated to another readily identifiable clinical of the Unit/Department for the shift or a period of time, which on balance, equated to the entire shift.

- **Do I receive the change of ward allowance if I am relocated to another clinical section at a time during my shift?**

The relocation would normally occur at the commencement of the shift. If however, it occurred during a rostered shift, where on balance, the period of relocation would constitute 'a rostered shift' then the allowance would be payable. This would cover situations where the delay occurred for the purpose of trying to avoid the payment.

- **Change of ward and Change of Roster**

There may be circumstances where both allowances are payable, for example the rostered location is changed and the actual shift is changed

Example; Alex is rostered to work an **AM shift on Ward A** [their base ward]. His roster needs to be changed due to staffing requirements, to work a **PM shift on Ward B**. Clause 41A [change of ward allowance] and Clause 45.8 [change of roster allowance] would both apply in this scenario.

Payment of Allowances

Both CoR and CoW allowances are paid through the payroll, on an ad hoc basis, through the addition of the allowance entitlement to be coded in Roster On.

It is important that managers fully understand the entitlements for these allowances and only apply them in the circumstances that apply.

Where to find more information

The General Nurses and Midwives Agreement 2024-2028 can be found at; [Nurses & Midwives \(westernhealth.org.au\)](https://www.westernhealth.org.au)

Guidance can be provided by your Divisional Director of Nursing & Midwifery, or People & Culture Business Partner.