



**Australian
Nursing &
Midwifery
Federation**
VICTORIAN BRANCH

Newsflash

COVID-19 information for aged care members

Thursday 29 July 2021

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Mandatory vaccinations – private and not-for-profit aged care

Commonwealth Government declaration

The ANMF remains in discussions with the Victorian Government following the Commonwealth Government's 28 June 2021 announcement that from 17 September 2021, COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory for all residential aged care workers.

State Government declaration

Similar to the influenza vaccination, the process of actually mandating this requirement falls to each of the states and territories. As of 27 July, Victoria was yet to make that declaration.

The Victorian Department of Health has advised ANMF that it is reviewing how it could meet the September timeline and to understand what this will mean for the sector in terms of implementation. That advice will be provided to members as soon as it becomes available.

Employer direction to be vaccinated

ANMF is aware that some aged care providers have commenced auditing of whether their employees have been vaccinated against COVID-19. The Commonwealth Government has foreshadowed that it will seek compliance with its direction through its regulatory oversight of aged care, regardless of any state-based declaration.

Residential aged care providers are required to report weekly to the Commonwealth Government on the:

- total number of workers and residents at each residential aged care service, and of those:
 - the number of workers and residents at each service who have received a single dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

- the numbers of workers and residents at each service who have received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The information your workplace reports will not identify any individual.

Can my employer require me to be vaccinated?

If the State Government makes a declaration, your employer will be required to comply with that. Some form of declaration is highly likely and may extend to both the COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations.

Where there is no state declaration, whether an individual employer can require its employees to be vaccinated is a question of whether that would be a lawful and reasonable direction.

A small number of cases have been taken to the Fair Work Commission where employees have been dismissed for not being vaccinated. The Fair Work Commission has sided with the employer's right to require vaccination. This is particularly so where the employee could be vaccinated but has chosen not to or cannot be vaccinated and the employer has no redeployment opportunities.

What does the ANMF advise?

In the interim, ANMF strongly encourages members to seek out the vaccination if you can be vaccinated.

If for any reason you cannot be vaccinated, you should attend at one of the Victorian Government vaccination hubs so that your case can be individually assessed, addressed, and formally recorded or ensure that you have contemporary medical evidence from your GP.

All nurses and aged care personal care workers, who have yet to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine (regardless of age) at a Victorian Government vaccine hub. (See below for booking information.)

Can I take personal leave to get the vaccine or if I become unwell following vaccination?

Yes, non-casual employees can take personal leave if they feel unwell following the vaccination, subject to meeting the evidence requirements in your enterprise agreement. Broadly that would be evidence that would need to satisfy a reasonable person.

The Commonwealth Government is encouraging providers to provide the vaccination to employees on-site or a similar arrangement. Taking personal leave to be vaccinated depends on the terms of your enterprise agreement.

For casual employees, the Commonwealth Government has made funds available to aged care providers as follows:

1. payment for each casual staff member's off-site vaccination (maximum of 2 doses/payments per casual staff member). This payment is a contribution towards the time casual staff are absent from the facility to receive their COVID-19 vaccination at an off-site vaccination clinic; and/or
2. one day of paid leave for casual staff (not eligible for entitlements) receiving an on or off-site vaccination, who was rostered on for a shift within 24-48hrs after receiving a vaccination, but suffered side effects from the vaccination and is unable to attend work for this reason.

To be eligible it must be the residential aged care facility that is your primary place of employment in the aged care sector, and you have been rostered on in the preceding four weeks, unless you were on approved leave.

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The Commonwealth Government has also funded providers up to \$500 per aged care facility to facilitate either on or off-site vaccinations for all staff (e.g. transport costs or arranging for groups of staff to be vaccinated off-site).

Where can get vaccinated?

All nurses and aged care personal care workers, who have yet to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine at a Victorian Government vaccine hub which are listed in the online booking system link below.

Eligibility is regardless of age.

If you have already received your first AstraZeneca dose the advice is to receive the second dose of AstraZeneca.

You must use the phone number or online appointment link below to access the Pfizer priority appointments. You can also book your second AstraZeneca vaccine appointment through this same process.

How to book a priority group COVID-19 vaccine appointment

Read the information about the booking process and the vaccines on the Victorian Government website <https://bit.ly/3dZjuC6>

then

Make an online booking via the Victorian Government's website - the booking system allows you to access appointments as part of a priority group. <https://portal.cvms.vic.gov.au/>

or

Call the Victorian Government Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 and tell the hotline operator you are part of the health care worker or aged care worker priority group.