

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update 45

ANMF seeking clarification on confusing aged care mandatory vaccination announcement

Mandatory vaccination decision raises many questions

ANMF is seeking urgent clarification for aged care staff regarding the National Cabinet decision to mandate COVID-19 vaccination.

Federal ANMF Secretary Annie Butler, on behalf of all state and territory ANMF Branches, has expressed concern that mandatory vaccination could be a 'political and not a health decision'. She has written to Prime Minister Scott Morrison asking for clarification on the following questions:

1. What education in relation to the vaccines and the announcement will be provided and disseminated to aged care staff?
2. What vaccine will the Federal Government make available to aged care staff and will they be offered a choice of vaccine?
3. Will a workplace delivery program be provided or are staff to rely on existing services only to be vaccinated?
4. What are the details of the grants for aged care facilities to support workers to receive the vaccine and what measures will be in place to ensure the grants are used solely for that purpose? And, will the grants apply to both casual and permanent aged care staff?
5. Will special paid leave be provided so that workers do not have to use personal leave for the vaccination and in the event they become unwell, as is available in several public health systems?
6. In the event that an aged care worker suffers a major adverse event following vaccination will they be covered by workers compensation?
7. What evidence will need to be submitted in order to access the above initiatives?
8. What impact will a vaccinated workforce have on the requirement for Single Site Employment directives to be issued into the future?

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

9. What contingency plans are in place or will be put in place to care for residents in facilities, in the event a number of workers do not receive their first vaccination by the September deadline?
10. Will the COVID-19 vaccine also be mandated for aged care residents, visitors and contractors?
11. Does the announcement also apply to those aged staff who are providing in-home care under home care packages?
12. What is to occur to those who may not have received their first vaccination by the September deadline? Are they to be stood down until they receive their vaccination or dismissed?
13. What arrangements will be in place for those who have legitimate health reasons as to why the vaccine is contraindicated? Will they be dismissed?
14. Will alternate work (other than direct resident care) within the facility be an option to standing down/dismissal that employers will be required to explore/provide?

ANMF will provide further information and advice to members as soon as we have answers to these questions.

Read the Federal ANMF Secretary Annie Butler's 29 June 2021 letter <https://bit.ly/3hnfs6W>

Read the Federal ANMF media release 29 June 2021 'Still many questions over mandatory aged care vaccinations' <https://bit.ly/3x4ZiWF>

What we know about the mandatory vaccination announcement

The National Cabinet met on Monday 28 June 2021 and agreed to mandate 'at least the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine' by 17 September for the residential aged care workforce.

In a statement released after the National Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the COVID-19 vaccinations would be mandated as a condition of working in an aged care facility.

The decision was based on advice provided by the Australian Health Protection Principal Commission which also advised National Cabinet that mandatory vaccination 'could have unintended consequences, including on the availability of the workforce, which in turn, could impact the quality and safety of resident care'.

The AHPPC also recommended that a 'robust risk and benefit assessment' should be provided to National Cabinet by early August, 'highlighting the key risks and proposed mitigations ahead of implementing the mandate.'

The Federal Government will provide aged care providers up to \$11 million in vaccination grants:

- casual staff going off-site for vaccination – a flat fee of \$80 payable per staff member, per dose
- paid leave for casual staff who become unwell after vaccination and do not have other leave entitlements – one day's paid leave (at a rate of \$185) for up to a quarter of the provider's total number of casual staff
- facilitation of off-site vaccination for employees – up to \$500 per site in flexible vaccination facilitation costs per site, which may be used for activities like: transport services, arranging groups of staff to be vaccinated and or any other reasonable expenses that incentivise staff to get vaccinated.

Read the Prime Minister's statement 28 June 2021 <https://bit.ly/3x4Bsu6>

Read the Australian Health Protection Principal Commission statement <https://bit.ly/3qA8u2A>

What ANMF has been calling for to increase aged care staff vaccination rates

ANMF is not convinced a confusing patchwork of grants will actually facilitate the mass vaccination of the aged care workforce. ANMF argues the Morrison Government needs to:

1. provide targeted education and direction on which vaccine and why
2. apply the same rules to residents, residents' visitors and all other contractors/health professionals attending the residential aged care facility - it is not just the staff who are in contact or in close proximity with residents
3. provide dedicated access to vaccination either at work or nearby across a range of hours and days that recognise the 24/7 nature of the work
4. provide special paid leave of up to four days that staff can access in the event they become unwell, so they don't have to take leave without pay or use their own minimal personal leave entitlement consistent with the Andrews Government provision for public aged care nurses.
5. clearly articulate what will happen if staff refuse to be vaccinated.

The 'priority 1a' aged care workforce vaccination timeline

7 January 2021 Prime Minister Scott Morrison announces the Federal Government's vaccine rollout phases and that the aged care workforce will be in the first priority phase. Read the press conference transcript <https://bit.ly/3jscDV5>

16 February 2021 - Health and Aged Care Minister Greg Hunt and Federal Aged Care Services Minister Richard Colbeck issue a media release promising to vaccinate the workforce urgently via in-reach in their workplace. Read the media release <https://bit.ly/3wPlt2n>

March 2021 the Federal Department of Health advises aged care staff to organise their own vaccination.

2 June 2021 Federal Aged Care Services Minister Richard Colbeck is questioned under the Senate Estimates process and for the first time says in-reach teams were only told to vaccinate residents and provide leftover vaccination to staff.

2 – 7 June 2021 Victorian Government creates a priority lane for aged care workers at its vaccination hubs.

28 June 2021 National Cabinet decides to make vaccination mandatory for the aged care workforce.

Mandatory vaccination – what is ANMF's position?

ANMF is concerned that the Morrison Government is using mandatory vaccination as a way to blame aged care workers for the failures of its own vaccine program which focused on residents.

ANMF is supportive of vaccination, but we do not support punitive measures as effective means to promote vaccination.

We support all direct care workers being vaccinated (subject to any recognised medical exclusions).

While the 'gold standard' is that workers should not be exposed to infectious diseases at work, this is not always possible to achieve. Hence vaccination is critical to ensure both a safe workplace for nurses and personal care workers, and for those in their care.

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ANMF supports all direct care workers being vaccinated against COVID-19 (subject to any recognised medical exclusions). Vaccination protects the health of nurses and carers and their residents from severe symptoms and death.

ANMF continues to strongly lobby the Morrison Government that it is vitally important employees are supported to achieve full vaccination and in circumstances where full vaccination is not possible, that an employee is not disadvantaged.

For more information read the federal ANMF *Vaccination and immunisation policy* via <https://bit.ly/3yUaJ4E>

Current restrictions

Metropolitan Melbourne <https://bit.ly/3x5qJiY>

Regional Victoria <https://bit.ly/3Agqu6W>

Where can I get tested for COVID-19?

Please get tested even with the slightest of symptoms.

Testing site information <https://bit.ly/2TB9eZ9>

Exposure sites

Public exposure sites in Victoria. Check this page regularly <https://bit.ly/35YOUUnv>

Personal protective equipment concern?

Members with concerns about PPE access, supply or level should:

1. **raise and submit OHS incident reports with your employer** as well as speaking directly with your manager
2. **involve your Health and Safety Rep** if you have one
3. **contact ANMF** via anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance (include your report and response if applicable) for further support and advice if after you have raised your concerns they are not addressed by your employer.

How to access ANMF support

ANMF is here to support our members in aged care during this challenging period. Representation and advice are available.

For general inquiries members are encouraged to complete an online Member Assistance inquiry form via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

If you feel that you are being disadvantaged by the aged care single-site employment direction, please contact ANMF via this form: anmfvic.asn.au/dualemployment

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\$450 test and isolation payment

The Victorian Government provides a \$450 test and isolation payment to workers required to isolate after taking a COVID-19 test who don't have access to paid leave. This is for private aged care workers too.

More information, eligibility, and applications <https://bit.ly/3fWygqQ>

\$1500 disaster leave payment

The Federal Government provides a \$1500 disaster leave payment if you tested positive or were identified as a close contact and have to isolate for 14 days. Private aged care workers are eligible for the payment if you do not have access to paid leave during your isolation period.

Call 180 22 66 to make a claim.

More information, eligibility, and applications <https://bit.ly/3bWnfXG>

Emergency accommodation for healthcare workers

The Victorian Government provides the 'frontline accommodation program' for health care workers if they need support to quarantine or isolate safely.

Private aged care nurses and personal care workers are eligible to access this program.

For details <https://bit.ly/2X6cABJ>

COVID-19 stressed? Take the self-care quiz

All nurses, midwives, personal care workers and nursing and midwifery students are encouraged to reflect on their current circumstances and wellbeing and fill out the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria's self-care plan questionnaire via <https://bit.ly/343qHLf>. You will be emailed a self-care plan.

To contact NMHPV call 9415 7551 or email admin@nmhp.org.au Find out more <https://www.nmhp.org.au>

Don't bring it home: guide to minimise the risk of infection

A reminder that ANMF (Vic Branch) has developed a guide to assist you in relation to returning home from work after a shift.

Job Reps and HSRs are encouraged to print the poster which is part of this PDF newsflash. You can also download the 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' A4 poster via bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH

ANMF Job Reps and Health and Safety Reps are encouraged to display this newsflash on their workplace noticeboard.

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Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection.

-  **1** On entry, remove your shoes and place in a plastic box.
-  **2** Leave your bag, wallet, mobile, keys, etc in a box near the entry.
-  **3** Change out of your clothes immediately and wash them. Use the hottest possible machine wash setting and dryer if you can.
-  **4** Have a shower.
-  **5** Clean items you've brought in and surfaces you've touched.

Remember to wash your hands regularly.

Cleaning tips

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- Hot soapy wash, wipe or disinfectant spray (depending on surface) phone cases, keys, ID, lanyard, glasses, etc.**

Consider changing in and out of your uniform/scrubs at work.