

## COVID Update – 18 September 2021

Categories : [COVID19](#)

Date : 18 September, 2021

Dear Members

You all continued to keep passenger and freight transport running through yet another week of COVID lockdowns. The focus of the Government continues to be on the reopening plan, with 70% vaccination rates of the over 16 population in NSW on track to be reached mid-October. Unfortunately, the Government is still dragging its heels on implementing testing regimes in every workplace to ensure they remain as COVID free as possible. Without a testing regime, members will continue to be at risk from workplace outbreaks as we've seen in the past few weeks.

Unfortunately for some regional areas, the reprieve from lockdown was short lived. At the time of publishing, the following LGAs re-entered lockdown due to the identification of COVID cases in their communities:

- Lismore (until 23 September 2021)
- Albury (until 23 September 2021)
- Glenn Innis (until 24 September 2021)
- Hilltops (until 24 September 2021)

The harsh deadline imposed by the Government on workers in the LGAs of concern is tomorrow. After then, all workers from those LGAs will only be able to leave their LGA for work if they have received their first dose of a COVID vaccine. If you are not vaccinated, you will be asked to utilise your leave entitlements. If you have no leave entitlements, you will be placed on unpaid leave until you are either vaccinated, or the public health order is lifted.

At this stage, we are not aware of any employer who is threatening people's jobs if they are unable to work due to the Public Health Order. If your employer does threaten this, please ensure that you let your organiser know and we will ensure that we address the issue.

For anybody that is worried about what coverage they have if they are "injured" due to having a COVID vaccine, recently the NSW Minister for Customer Service provided some guidance on the issue. He stated that:

*"If an employer mandates COVID-19 vaccination, this would increase the likelihood that a worker would be able to satisfy the requisite tests in the [Workers Compensation Act]. In other words, it would increase the likelihood of a finding that there was a relevant causal link between the employment and any vaccine injury"*

As is often the case, the law has not kept up with the rapid movement of COVID and the vaccine rollout.

The Greens have put forward a bill to NSW Parliament that seeks ensure that any worker who has a significant adverse reaction from a COVID vaccine will be eligible for workers compensation payments to cover lost pay, medical expenses as well as lump sum compensation for permanent injury or death. We will keep members up to date as this progresses, because it is vitally important that protections for all workers keep up with the rapidly changing health environment.

That is the NSW scheme. The Federal Government also has a scheme for people affected by a COVID vaccination. This scheme provides for compensation to be paid if people suffer certain side effects from a COVID vaccine. It covers the costs of injuries \$5,000 and above. For more information, visit this website: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-claims-scheme>.

We are also working with community groups across NSW to ensure that the plan for reopening and recovery after this damaging lockdown is fair and equitable. In this, we are fighting to ensure that

safe and secure jobs are delivered to the areas hit hardest by the pandemic.

As always, stay safe

RTBU NSW