

COVID Update – Mandatory Vaccinations - 16 October 2021

Categories : [COVID19](#)

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Since Transport for NSW announced on Wednesday that it was considering mandating COVID vaccinations for the staff of all its agencies, we have had some understandably concerned and anxious members. Although it is TfNSW that made the announcement this week, going forward more and more employers will make similar moves, so the following is for all RTBU members.

Make no mistake, we have arrived at this situation because of the failure of both the Federal and State Governments in relation to vaccine rollouts, quarantine systems, virus containment, and allowing the spread of misinformation to flourish. Any negative impact on members because of vaccine mandates is on their heads.

The Health Advice and a safe workplace

The RTBU recognises and accepts the health advice that vaccination is a key part of responding to the safety issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic. All workers are entitled to a safe workplace and have any risk to their health and safety reduced as far as possible.

What is also, essential to creating a safe workplace is long-term workplace testing systems which involves a variety of onsite testing systems, such as saliva swab testing, Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) and PCR Surveillance testing, combined with other control measures such as mask wearing, thorough cleaning regimes, physical distancing and the use of QR Codes.

The Federal Government's poor handling of the vaccine rollout and the politicisation of communication at a state level have negatively impacted people's perception of the vaccination process and the science backing it. Misrepresentation of the science by a variety of political leaders has facilitated a transfer of mistrust of the government onto the science itself.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, your union has worked hard to keep us all safe by advocating for onsite testing and access to priority vaccination for essential workers. We have also lobbied and achieved in many cases protections for vulnerable workers and special leave provisions. We continue to be actively involved in implementing specific work, health, and safety controls, and organising members. This work continues and we will continue it together. Remember, it was our Bus Drivers last year that first raised the issue of customers needing to wear masks for the safety others and our Sydney Trains cleaner Delegates and HSRs who took a stand against the reckless indifference to their safety by management in March 2020.

Here to support and represent as always

Where any member is treated unfairly, the RTBU will intervene to assist. The pandemic has not changed this. Where a member has been treated unfairly, we offer industrial advice and assistance

particular to their case. When it comes to vaccinations, members with medical contraindications (you can download the form [here](#)), members who are unable to access a vaccination, and members whose individual circumstances make vaccination difficult should contact us at covid@rtbu-nsw.asn.au.

Many members have asked us about legal options in response to the mandate on vaccines. We have commissioned the preparation of legal advice regarding any decision by an employer to require a vaccination to come to work. **We anticipate that this legal advice will be finalised early next week and we will provide members with that advice in full.**

We also continue to monitor the legal proceedings underway in various jurisdictions across NSW and interstate regarding the mandating of a COVID vaccine across a range of industries by major employers and state governments.

To be clear, if a decision is made to mandate vaccines and this affects a member's employment, we believe the employer has a responsibility to look after that worker and treat them fairly. This includes assistance to find alternative employment and other financial assistance. The union is here to hold the employer to account for our members.

Beware of scams

Some members are rightly feeling vulnerable at this time, and we must remember that there are always people out there trying to take advantage of people at low points.

We are aware there is a scam circulating amongst some members regarding COVID-19 representation, promising a range of things. Like the scam text messages we have all been receiving where you are asked to "click on a link" for a bogus parcel delivery or a bogus voicemail, this scam is designed to take your money. We encourage members to exercise caution and not lose money to this scam. Your job is too important for you to be scammed out of it. The RTBU is here to offer advice and represent you in your industrial matters and you should get in touch

at covid@rtbu-nsw.asn.au.

We are a union of close to 15,000 members and we make our decisions together. **Our industrial democracy is part of who we are and is the foundation on which we exercise our power.** That means from time to time there may be individuals in our union who have not had their expectations met. To those members, please feel free to submit a complaint to covid@rtbu-nsw.asn.au and we will respond to you personally.

As always, stay safe