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AMA CALLS FOR MANDATORY VACCINATION ACROSS ENTIRE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Public health orders should mandate vaccination in health care workers first, and give legal certainty to other workplaces wanting to follow

The AMA is calling for mandatory vaccinations for the workforce of the entire health care system including support staff like cleaners, receptionists and contractors as soon as practical.

The AMA says public health orders to mandate vaccinations should begin in hospitals, then the wider health system.

With worrying numbers of COVID-19-infected frontline workers furloughed and unable to work, as well as several clusters being linked to hospitals, AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said mandatory vaccines for healthcare workers are needed to sustain the health system into the future as we learn to live with COVID-19.

“Australians must understand that we will be living with COVID-19 for a long time to come and that will inevitably involve a longer, heavier than normal reliance on our doctors, nurses, hospitals and allied health.

“We need to bring these workers and the environment they work in, out of crisis mode and the first step towards that is to protect them through vaccination.

“This is about health care worker safety and the safety of patients, and not about vaccines by force.

“AMA proposes nationally consistent public health orders of state and territory governments to authorise mandatory vaccinations across the health care system for all staff as soon as is reasonably possible.

“We’ve said plans to reopen Australia will be a disaster unless our health sector is ready and that will mean having a fully protected medical workforce.

“There is widespread uncertainty as to whether other occupations and workplaces can also mandate vaccinations. The law needs clarity to give employers and employees certainty.

“AMA proposes nationally consistent public health orders be issued by state and territory governments to provide legal protection to any employer who can also reasonably establish worker safety would benefit from a workplace vaccine mandate. Longer term, statutory coverage may be required.

“SPC and QANTAS have taken the lead mandating vaccines for their workforces, but we know it’s very complex and expensive for small employers to meet with the legalities required. National Cabinet needs to coordinate state and territory action to give legal certainty.”

Dr Khorshid said mandating vaccines for health care workers was the next logical step since making vaccines mandatory for aged care workers.

The AMA also backed the NSW Government's adoption of public health orders mandating vaccines for health care workers in both public and private hospitals.

“With billions of doses administered worldwide, we now have extensive data on the vaccines in use in Australia. They are incredibly safe and very effective at preventing infection, severe illness and hospitalisation.

“People have nothing to fear from vaccination and everything to fear from COVID-19,” Dr Khorshid said

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