

## Vaccination Implementation Principles

Aged care providers and unions are strong supporters of vaccination and immunisation, including COVID-19 vaccination. We understand how important it is that workers, and the vulnerable people they care for are afforded the protection that vaccination offers. We have therefore been committed to working cooperatively with the Government since the commencement of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out to ensure its success. We remain committed to working cooperatively with the Government to achieve high rates of vaccination across the community, most particularly in high-risk sectors such as aged care.

Aged Care providers and unions are frustrated and angry at the failure of the Federal Government to rollout the vaccine in a sector that was rightly identified by health experts to be the highest priority. Providers and unions have been calling for fast action on vaccinating workers within the high-risk sector for at least six months.

It is the Federal Government, not the workers or providers, that are responsible for the low rates of vaccination in the aged care workforce. The Federal Government has failed to deliver workplace vaccination and continued to ignore advice that vaccine supply, accessibility and support are the central barriers in aged care, not hesitancy. These issues must be addressed if we are going to protect these workers and the vulnerable people in their care.

As was promised by the Federal Government at the outset, the aged care workforce, across residential care and community care must be an urgent priority and be supported to have simple, easy access to the vaccine, appropriate leave provisions and clear, evidence informed vaccine communications.

Further, the decision made to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for aged care workers working in residential care announced on 28 June 2021 leaves workers, unions and providers uncertain about the expectations of this requirement and the ability to meet it within the announced timeframe. We must ensure through this process that any unintended consequences on aged care staff or the people they care for are identified and addressed as a matter of urgency. This must include the Federal Government undertaking, in consultation with aged care providers and unions, the risk and benefit assessment that has been recommended.<sup>1</sup>

Unions and providers collectively call on the Federal Government to immediately address the following five key principles that are essential to the success of the vaccine roll-out for all aged care workers:

### **1. Resident and Worker safety**

The Government must ensure it prioritises the safety of residents, individuals supported by care at home services and staff. Quality and safety standards for care delivery must be maintained including by ensuring there is enough staff to provide care, including backfill when vaccine related leave is required, infection control and prevention and continuity of care.

### **2. Government funded In-reach workplace vaccination programs and prioritised access to Pfizer vaccination:**

The Federal Government must fund in-reach workplace vaccination programs for the aged care workforce that are easily accessible and available, including in regional and remote areas. These programs require expertise in logistics management to ensure they are effectively achieved in an urgent manner.

In the situation where workers are unable to access in-reach workplace vaccination there must be genuinely prioritised access to alternative vaccination avenues. These must enable workers to be vaccinated without delay and be located close to their workplaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, update 29 June 2021, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-residential-aged-care-worker-covid-19-vaccination>.

**3. Paid Vaccination Leave:**

Federal government funded special paid vaccination leave must be available for **all** aged care workers – including ancillary staff. Workers need access to up to two days leave per dose to attend vaccination and recover from any effects/reactions post vaccination. This must also include paid travel time for workers if they are unable to access an in-reach workplace vaccination program.

**4. Targeted vaccine education and communication:**

Introduce a communication strategy in consultation with unions and providers targeted at the aged care workforce and across the wider community. A clear and targeted communication/education campaign for aged care workers, identifying where and when they can access Pfizer vaccinations, irrespective of age, and the leave provisions available.

**5. Transparency and Accountability on vaccine data and supply**

*Vaccination Data*

The Federal Government must provide clear, accurate and publicly available data on vaccination rates to be updated daily. This data needs to enable clear line of sight on locations and vaccination rates to inform progress and identify gaps in coverage.

Vaccination data needs to be collected once at the point of vaccination and include all data fields to enable informed policy. It must include a person’s place of employment.

*Vaccine Supply Data*

Transparent data that is publicly available outlining the supply of vaccines including, national stocks, jurisdictional supply and future shipments is also required.

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