



21 August 2024

**RE: Response to proposal to revoke Secretary Directions mandating COVID-19 vaccination for healthcare workers**

Ambulance Employees Australia Victoria (AEAV), a division of the United Workers Union (UWU), is writing regarding the proposal to revoke Secretary Directions that mandate COVID-19 vaccination for healthcare workers in Victoria.

Following consultations with members, we advise that Ambulance Victoria union members support the continued requirement for all healthcare workers to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. Members request that the government ensure ongoing access to COVID-19 vaccination for on-road staff, with the associated costs covered during work hours. Members also request that access to the Novavax vaccine be provided should it become available in Australia.

COVID-19 and its various mutations, which have shown considerable resilience by persisting in the community and leading to numerous hospitalisations, pose a significant threat to the healthcare workforce, regardless of vaccination status. This risk is also present with various virulent strains of influenza affecting the community.

Under current conditions, the levels of personal leave available to healthcare workers are insufficient to cover the impact of these diseases alone. Therefore, a dedicated furlough system for Infectious Diseases Leave is necessary to protect both the workforce and the public. Healthcare workers must have access to a separate, dedicated pool of paid leave to take time off during the infectious stage of any potentially contagious disease.

UWU recommends the following actions:

1. **Implement Infectious Diseases Leave:** Establish a dedicated leave system for healthcare workers to take time off when dealing with COVID-19.
2. **Cover COVID-19 Vaccination Costs:** Ensure that the costs of COVID-19 vaccinations are covered for healthcare workers during work hours.
3. **Provide Access to Novavax:** Offer the Novavax vaccine when it becomes available in Australia.

Sincerely,  
Ambulance Employees Australia Victoria  
United Workers Union