



The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care

Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck
Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services
Minister for Sport

Dear Approved Provider

I am writing to you regarding the upcoming introduction of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for residential aged care workers.

It is a requirement of National Cabinet that all aged care workers are vaccinated by 17 September 2021. On 28 June 2021, National Cabinet agreed that workers in residential aged care facilities must receive a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine by 17 September 2021. The following States have already issued Public Health Orders: Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland, and others are expected to implement this requirement shortly. In order to achieve national consistency, state and territory directions will align with parameters endorsed by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Residential aged care workers perform a critical role caring for and protecting senior Australians. Vaccination against COVID-19 provides vital protection to aged care workers and residents, who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. I trust you will support this important initiative by encouraging and facilitating the vaccination of your workforce.

There are a range of mechanisms available to support residential aged care workers to access vaccine. All residential aged care workers, irrespective of their age, are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine.

The Department of Health is working with each residential aged care facility to ensure plans are in place, and to provide support where needed, to ensure every residential aged care worker has access to a COVID-19 vaccination prior to 17 September.

Every residential aged care facility is being offered an on-site vaccination clinics for workers and residents not yet vaccinated. These clinics are being delivered by residential aged care providers, GPs and Commonwealth vaccine providers. Your Primary Health Network will be able to advise you on delivery of these clinics.

In addition, dedicated vaccination hubs are being delivered by Commonwealth vaccine providers in catchment areas for aged care facilities. Your facility will be contacted by HealthDirect if this is an option for your facility.

State and territory clinics and primary care clinics, including general practices, Commonwealth vaccination clinics (GP respiratory clinics), Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and pharmacies, are also prioritising residential aged care workers.

Residential aged care workers need only identify themselves to these clinics to receive an appointment within 7 days. Workers can also refer to the eligibility checker at Health.gov.au for available clinics or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 (select option 4) for any questions about vaccination or for help to book a vaccination appointment.

I would also like to remind you of the obligation to report and keep updated data on numbers of vaccinated workers and residents at a facility level. It is intended that the vaccination rates for residential aged care facilities will be publicly available on www.health.gov.au by Monday 23 August 2021. As of 17 August 2021, My Aged Care data indicates that over 63 per cent of workers have received a first dose and over 43 per cent are fully vaccinated. While these levels indicate a strong commitment from residential aged care workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19, there remains a significant proportion of this essential workforce yet to be vaccinated ahead of 17 September 2021.

If your facility has an on-site clinic or organises for a number of workers to be vaccinated off-site, in between reporting periods (every Tuesday) we urge you to submit your updated data on workforce vaccination as soon as possible. This ensures we have the most up to date data on worker vaccination levels.

Support is available through the Residential Aged Care COVID-19 Employee Vaccination Support Grant program, which will enable residential aged care workers to receive a vaccine at off-site vaccination centres and general practices:

- Casual residential aged care workers will be able to be paid via their employer for:
 - a fee of \$80 per staff member, per dose, for going off-site for vaccination
 - paid leave if unwell after vaccination and the staff member has no other leave entitlements
 - a day's paid leave (at a rate of \$185).
- Up to \$500 per aged care facility is also available to contribute to costs that may be incurred in organising workers to be vaccinated off-site, such as transport services.

As endorsed by the AHPPC, I expect exemptions to the mandatory requirement to be limited. As such, it is critical the vaccination rates of aged care workers continues to increase, and that this happens as a priority.

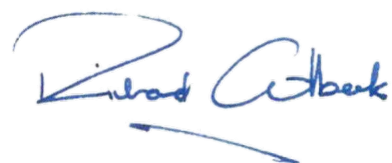
The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has prepared the **enclosed** letter outlining the monitoring they will be undertaking of aged care providers in facilitating the vaccination of workers and residents, as part of ensuring providers fulfil their responsibilities in providing residential aged care.

Thank you for your support of this important initiative to vaccinate the aged care workforce and for your ongoing commitment to the care and wellbeing of senior Australians.

Yours sincerely



Greg Hunt



Richard Colbeck

Encl (1)