

IEU-QNT Member Q&A: COVID-19 Vaccinations

Is our union calling for education employees to be given priority access to vaccinations?

Our union's position is that schools should be appropriately classified so that a high priority for vaccinations is provided.

This is the position our union has been **repeatedly advocating at a federal level to government.**

Given the complex scenarios of schools, kindergartens and other education services, and the extent of their reach into the community, it would be reasonable for school workplaces to be classified as a frontline priority.

Clear evidence has now emerged interstate and overseas showing that new and highly aggressive variants of the virus are more transmissible, particularly among children. Health authorities have confirmed transmission between children and experts agree that **recent outbreaks reinforce the need to accelerate the vaccination of school employees.**

As such, the potential closure of a school or kindergarten due to lockdown or infection has greater potential consequences than almost any other organisation.

Can my employer force me to have the vaccine?

We expect that most employers will adopt a position whereby they encourage staff to be vaccinated.

We are not aware of any employer in our sector adopting a mandatory vaccination requirement.

For our part, our union will advise members consistent with the current expert advice of the federal, state and territory medical authorities, whilst taking into account any relevant individual medical considerations of members.

That is, should the Queensland Chief Health Officer, for example, 'strongly encourage' vaccinations, our union would do likewise.

Any employer looking to introduce a mandatory vaccination policy in your school, kindergarten or workplace must consult with you and our union before taking any such action.

Can my employer ask me for proof that I am vaccinated?

It will depend on the policies that apply in your workplace.

Speak with your employer if you do not want to let them know if you are vaccinated and why.

If you believe you have been treated unfairly or discriminated against because of your vaccination status, you should contact our union directly for advice and assistance.

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I can't have the vaccine for medical reasons, will our union support me at work?

While our union will advise members consistent with the current expert advice of the federal, state and territory medical authorities, we will provide workplace advocacy, advice and support to any member in regard to their relevant individual medical considerations in relation to the vaccine.

What leave can my employer provide so I can attend a vaccination appointment?

Employer support for their staff seeking to access the vaccination program can help minimise the risk posed by COVID to our school operations and the safety of staff and students.

Our union has called on all school employers to provide additional special paid vaccination leave for employees who are unable to obtain appointments outside of work time. Such leave would allow for the injections necessary and would also provide employees with time to recover from any side effects of the vaccine if needed.

Our union is always here for you

For additional advice and support regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and your workplace, please contact our union on 1800 177 938 (QLD) or 1800 351 996 (NT) or email your question directly to industrial@ieuqnt.org.au