

Groote Archipelago COVID-19 ADVICE #93 – 13 October 2021 - COVID-19 Update: Mandating COVID-19 Vaccinations

Dear All

The Chief Minister has made a number of announcements regarding the NT COVID-19 response.

Mandatory Vaccination:

- The Chief Health Officer (CHO) has made a direction ([CHO Declaration 55](#)) mandating vaccines for workers in high risk workplace to be vaccinated.
- This mandate covers all public facing roles likely to come in to contact with a vulnerable person, as well as essential infrastructure, food or essential goods or logistics for the Northern Territory.
 - A vulnerable person includes those who are at risk of contracting a severe illness of COVID-19, including but not limited to Aboriginal people and children aged under 12.
- The Direction lists examples of workplaces that require mandatory vaccination; however, this list is not exhaustive. The Direction applies to industries who directly face customers in circumstances where workers may not know whether the person is a vulnerable person (eg. Retail, hospitality). Exemptions are extremely narrow and must be backed up by medical evidence.
- For those who the CHO Direction applies to in order to continue working in the same role, they must have:
 - Their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by **12 November 2021**.
 - Two doses (fully vaccinated) by **24 December 2021**.
 - If they have not had their first vaccination by the 13 November 2021, they will not be permitted to enter the workplace and will face a \$5000 if they do not comply with the CHO direction.
- The CHO direction includes provisions for workplaces to request proof of vaccination from staff, and requires workplaces to keep a register of staff vaccination rates.

The COVID-19 vaccine is our best defence against the virus and the key to protecting our vulnerable populations, our workers and our health system from being overwhelmed. You can book your vaccine [online](#) or via 1800 490 484.

Update on the Vaccine rollout:

This week, the NT has reached 80% first-dose vaccine coverage for people aged 16 and over. Over a third of 12-15 year olds have received a first dose. The NT's target is to reach 80% double-dose by early November 2021 for those aged 16 and over. The NT is on track to meet this target by mid-late November 2021.

Update on the NT Roadmap:

Dependent on double-dose vaccination rates, the NT will begin to gradually change its border protection and quarantine measures as follows:

- In December 2021, fully vaccinated travellers from hotspots can undertake home quarantine in the NT.
- In early 2022, further steps could include:
 - Reducing the 14-day home quarantine period for vaccinated people;
 - Allowing vaccinated people to leave home quarantine once they return a negative COVID-19 test and comply with an ongoing testing regime; and
 - Allowing vaccinated international travellers to enter the NT under the same conditions.

More information for businesses:

Under the CHO Direction, the employer or workplace operator must keep a register of each worker's vaccination status and record of the steps the employer has taken to verify the worker's vaccinations status. The employer must also record that they have sighted evidence of vaccination (for example, the worker has provided and the employer has sighted the worker's Australian Government issued COVID-19 vaccination certificate). These records will need to be provided to an authorised officer upon request.

There are options available to an employer or workplace operator to make alternative arrangements for a worker who is not vaccinated against COVID-19. This includes directing the worker to complete duties in another location or in a manner which complies with the CHO Direction. Once the worker has been vaccinated, they can return to their normal duties.

Not every person is able to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The CHO Direction includes an exemption in the event that a person cannot receive a vaccine due to a proven contraindication to all available COVID-19 vaccines.

The CHO Direction does not provide an exemption for someone who is able to get the vaccine, but chooses not to get the vaccine.

Under the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011*, failing to comply with a CHO Direction is an offence and incurs penalties.

In the event a worker refuses to get the vaccine or refuses to disclose their vaccination status, that worker cannot enter the workplace, which may affect their employment. For more information and Frequently Asked Questions about the mandatory vaccine visit <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/stay-safe/freedoms-and-restrictions>

Kind Regards

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