



Our reference: 06860-2021

Department of
**Seniors, Disability Services and
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Partnerships**

Mr Alex Scott
Secretary
Together Queensland Industrial Union of Employees
PO BOX 3272
SOUTH BRISBANE BC QLD 4101
Consultation@together.org.au

Dear Mr Scott

Thank you for your letter of 13 December 2021 regarding COVID-19 vaccination mandates and risk mitigation in the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (the department).

As transmission rates of COVID-19 in the community are projected to rise following the opening of Queensland's border, I can assure you that the health and safety of our employees, vulnerable clients and the community is the paramount concern in the department's ongoing response to the public health emergency.

To date, the department has been working in consultation with Unions to implement the Chief Health Officer for Queensland *Workers in a healthcare setting (COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements) Direction (No. 2)* (the CHO Direction). The CHO Direction was initially issued on 10 November 2021 and primarily effected employees in Disability Accommodation and Respite Services, as well as the Forensic Disability Service. The successful implementation of this CHO Direction in a short timeframe has required significant effort, and the department has done this in a way to ensure all impacted employees are treated fairly, respectfully and that any negative impacts on wellbeing are minimised. As a result, a large proportion of our workforce has already provided proof of being fully vaccinated.

The department is currently in the phase of undertaking risk assessments associated with COVID-19 in the workplace and in the community, and what reasonable actions we can take to mitigate against these risks. The assessment considers risk to the health and safety of our employees, the vulnerable clients and communities we provide services to and others; to service delivery and operational requirements; and to business continuity. While it is recognised that vaccination is one of the most effective strategies to minimise risk, the outcome of these risk assessments will inform the response, to ensure we remain compliant with our legal obligations as an employer.

With respect to the requested timeframes outlined in your correspondence, I agree that a swift response is required due to the rapidly evolving nature of this public health emergency. Accordingly, the department will be making its best efforts to achieve the timeframes where possible.

1 William Street Brisbane
PO Box 15397 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia

Telephone: +61 7 3003 6451
www.dsdsatip.qld.gov.au

ABN: 25 791 185 155

I can confirm that the department will shortly commence the process of requesting employees to voluntarily disclose their vaccination status as part of the risk assessments. This is expected to occur by the requested date of 23 January 2022.

The department will also shortly seek to commence consultation with Unions on a proposed departmental policy, which may require employees to be fully vaccinated where necessitated by the risk assessment. This will be a continuation of the consultation which has been ongoing between the department and Unions in relation to vaccine mandates, pursuant to the CHO Direction.

I am pleased that the department, Union officials and Union members have been working effectively together on the implementation of the CHO Direction, and I welcome the opportunity to continue this important work. It is critical to ensure that our workplace is safe and fair, and that we provide as much protection as possible to the vulnerable communities we provide services to.

If you require further information, I encourage you to contact Mr Neil Smith, Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources and Ethical Standards, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships 3097 8547 or by email at Neil.Smith@dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ian Mackie
Acting Director-General
22/12/2021