



# SitRep 67/2021

## Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate Update

As members are aware, following consultation with the FBEU and HSR's, as of today, a Covid-19 vaccination requirement policy is in effect. This policy will mandate that all staff employed by FRNSW require 2 doses of a TGA approved Covid-19 vaccination.

As an independent umpire, SafeWork NSW have been involved in consultation and now consider the process to be in accordance with legislation.

The 30 November circular from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) on vaccination mandates states that *"the NSW Government expects all government sector employees who can be safely vaccinated, to do so at the earliest opportunity."* As of now, RFS volunteers appears to be the only emergency service workforce yet to mandate. This puts the public, professional firefighters, and other emergency service personnel at risk.

We have today written to both Minister Elliott and Commissioner Rogers seeking urgent intervention to implement a mandate immediately. We have also written to FRNSW and sought that they likewise call for a mandate for volunteer firefighters and in the meantime conduct an urgent risk assessment to mitigate the risks posed to professional firefighters who turn out alongside RFS volunteers.

## Covid-19 Policy agreement

The FBEU has worked tirelessly since the publication of the Covid-19 draft mandate policy that was issued by FRNSW. The FBEU has been committed to negotiating reasonable terms for retiring members and those who are choosing to wait for alternate vaccinations.

The terms agreed to by FRNSW and the FBEU are as follows;

### Members considering retirement

FRNSW has agreed to enable firefighters considering retirement who choose not to be vaccinated to leave the organisation under certain terms. Members must email their zone management and operational staffing to receive more details and confirm their intention to retire by 17 January 2022.

### Separation

For those that choose not to comply with the policy, FRNSW will pursue a goal of separation not termination and maintain a commitment to avoid Professional Standard Branch matters to ensure that those exiting the organisation are not disadvantaged when it comes to finding other employment.

### Alternative TGA approved vaccine

- Members waiting for an alternative TGA approved vaccine will need to email management before the 17 January 2022 requesting an extension of leave. An extension may be granted until the 31 March 2022 by which time the employee must have received the first dose of an approved vaccine.



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- If employees have not received a first dose by the 31 March 2022, they will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as per the policy.
- If they have received a first dose by the 31 March 2022 but are still waiting for a second dose then, having provided evidence of the first dose, a further extension of leave will be considered. An extension of leave will align with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommended vaccine dosage interval.
- Regarding the holding of positions, the conditions as outlined in the policy will continue to apply. The policy references that for Clause 28 areas once an employee is compliant, they are redeployed to a station within the Transfer Register Area that they were assigned to, and for GSA areas once they are compliant, they are redeployed to a suitable alternate position to meet the staffing needs of FRNSW.
- Those employees not fully vaccinated by the 30 April will be assessed on a case-by case basis as per the policy.

## Return to duty pre-2 months

Requirement for employees to remain on 2 months leave even if they become fully vaccinated. There is flexibility within the policy to allow for staff to return to work once they have provided their vaccinations status albeit, potentially at a different location. This will be based on a need's basis and at the discretion of FRNSW.

## Right of return

For those leaving FRNSW, information will be included in the separation letter advising that consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis on returning to FRNSW within 12 months. Potential re-employment with FRNSW will require an application and assessment process and will be at the discretion of FRNSW.

## Restrictions on engagement with RFS

Until such time as FRNSW and RFS are prepared to work with the FBEU to minimise the risk posed by RFS engagement, Station Commanders are to determine whether an extra FRNSW appliance(s) is required to actively minimise contact with unvaccinated workers.

Additionally, members are encouraged to report such exposures as near miss reports.

If you require further clarification, contact the FBEU office or your SCOM rep.

In Unity

**Leighton Drury**  
State Secretary