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Tēnā koe Jai

Policies affecting the health care workforce

Thank you for your email of 1 August 2022 to the former Minister of Health, Hon Andrew Little, about the health care workforce. Your letter has now come to me. I appreciate you taking the time to write and I am sorry for the delay in replying to you.

I acknowledge your comments regarding vaccine mandates for the health care workforce. Vaccination requirements for health care workers ended in September 2022. The rationale for establishing and ending the vaccination mandates for health care workers is set out in this document released in November 2022:

[https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/memo - phra of covid-19 mandated measures 17 august 2022.pdf](https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/memo_-_phra_of_covid-19_mandated_measures_17_august_2022.pdf):

The document notes:

‘This mandate was enacted to provide personal protection to workers in high-risk settings against COVID-19. It was also to help prevent transmission between workers and vulnerable people to whom they have a duty of care, or to those in public facing roles. Although there is limited data, two dose and first booster vaccination rates among mandated workers are estimated to be greater than 95 percent.

Population immunity is currently substantially more complex than when the vaccination mandate was introduced, when there was a clear demarcation in risk of infection between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. The range of different vaccination schedules, the time since vaccination, immunity due to infection and the role of new variants are now important variables in the risk of COVID-19 infection.’

Now the vaccine requirements have ended, it is up to individual employers to decide whether they wish to rehire anyone who was dismissed for continued non-compliance with the vaccination mandate when it was in place.

As you note, a suite of initiatives was announced in 2022 aimed at addressing supply and demand challenges facing the health workforce. The initiatives included funding of up to \$10,000 for international health care workers to get their professional qualifications recognised in New Zealand. This is one of many initiatives that we are using to alleviate the pressures on our health workforce. Many of these pressures existed before the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiatives include campaigns targeted towards both New Zealand and migrant workers. Further information about these initiatives can be found here:

www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-plan-boost-health-workers.

Thank you again for writing, I wish you the very best.

Nāku noa, nā



Hon Ayesha Verrall
Minister of Health