

13 April 2022

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Request for Official Information responded to under the Local Government and Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) (the Act) – reference: OIR 2122-235

I refer to your information request we received on 6 April 2022 for the following:

I believe that KCDC recently decided to not review its staff COVID-19 Vaccination Policy until June 2022. This is not only very disappointing, but completely out of step with many other councils in New Zealand, including Auckland Council, which today has removed mandates requiring staff to hold vaccine passes, and Wellington City Council, who have signaled their intention to drop their staff vaccine mandates later this week. See: <https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2022/04/council-updates-vaccination-approach-and-requirements/?fbclid=IwAR2LJmddTYDfdZCBeJkvKBhHLFI25lvzKfe4zMZcGP0PM03zzHR98JUWDo>

People and their families continue to be harmed by these mandates, which the government has actually lifted for most jobs. If there is no longer a valid reason for them to continue, they should be dropped immediately. The current KCDC COVID-19 Risk Assessment (attached) only recommends vaccination for some roles, it does not mandate it.

As a local rate payer I am requesting that you as Mayor instigate an immediate review of KCDC's COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, (not leaving it to the CEO) in light of the decisions made by two of the largest councils in New Zealand.

The Council's Covid-19 Vaccination Policy will be reviewed, and this will include a review of the Risk Assessment. As to when the review will be carried out and by whom will be an operational decision made by the Chief Executive and any review will take into account the context of the workplace and the community.

KCDC's Risk Assessment undertaken for the original policy needs to be reviewed, in line with current government, public health and legal guidance, as outlined below:

Information for employers can be found at: <https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/covid-19-vaccination-and-employment/#controls>

This advice clearly states that all government employment mandates have been dropped except for:

- * Health and disability sector workers (which includes aged care workers)*
- * Prison staff*
- * Border and MIQ workers*

Current government advice, which is based on advice from the Director General of Health, is that mandates for the general workforce are no longer required as a measure to control the spread of COVID-19. Further advice to employers include:

** Ensuring there is as short a timeframe as possible between the dropping of public mandates and dropping of staff mandates.*

** Being clear on what arrangements will be in place if they intend to stand-down unvaccinated workers from performing certain work during that time frame (for example whether the workers will be paid or expected to perform different work or work in a different way).*

** Being clear how they will deal with different views amongst workers (for example those hesitant to work with unvaccinated colleagues).*

** Being clear how they will reintegrate unvaccinated workers into the workplace (particularly those currently stood-down and potentially those who had their employment terminated). See: Positive conversations and reaching agreement*

Based on current government guidance contained the links above, I request that KCDC immediately undertake the following actions:

- 1. Review the KCDC Risk Assessment to reflect the latest public health information and advice. The review to be done by a suitably qualified Health and Safety professional, to determine what controls are appropriate in the workplace. Any previously completed assessments should be reviewed to reflect the latest government guidance.*

The Council's Covid-19 Vaccination Policy will be reviewed, and this will include a review of the Risk Assessment. As to when the review will be carried out and by whom will be a decision made by the Chief Executive and any review will take into account the context of the workplace and the community.

- 2. Drop the current requirement for staff to hold vaccine passes.*

Until the review of the Council's Covid-19 Vaccination Policy, the requirements currently in place will remain until further notice.

- 3. Cease all staff terminations currently underway, pending a review of the Risk Assessment.*

The Council is currently working through processes with its employees and will not comment publicly on employment matters.

The numbers are dropping and your last excuse as stated in the local newspaper (to which the local public can not even reply) that we have a large older community to protect of which I am one, these older people have mostly all been vaccinated so are somewhat protected! What is the point of mandating younger local employees and local business?

The Council's Covid-19 Vaccination Policy requires all Council employees to be fully vaccinated. We did not differentiate between age group of our employees as the Covid-19 Vaccination Policy applies across the organisation and to clarify it is an internal policy which does not mandate any local business.

It's discriminating against those who may not be able to be vaccinated, either for health reasons or from personal choice. In fact from the the newly appointed Aged Care Commissioner Carolyn Cooper.

If you could give one message to older New Zealanders what would it be?

"All people have the right to make informed decisions and give informed consent about their treatment, that meets their needs and upholds their dignity and mana."

Which to me seems appropriate for everyone!

The Council takes its responsibility for providing a healthy and safe working environment very seriously. The Council has considered its obligations as an employer and has taken into consideration the information provided by the Ministry of Health and the New Zealand Government about managing Covid-19.

Following the consultation process with staff the Council came to the decision that vaccination is the best way to protect against the risk of Covid-19 infections and transmission in the workplace and as such has put in place its Covid-19 Vaccination Policy.

Yours sincerely



Dianne Andrew
Organisational Development Manager
Te Kaihautū mo te Hunga Mahi