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Nationwide mandatory vaccinations for hospital workers

Private hospitals are calling on the National Cabinet to adopt an Australia-wide position mandating vaccinations of people working in hospitals.

The Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) has written to the Prime Minister, premiers and chief ministers seeking their support to adopt a nationally consistent position with respect to the mandatory vaccination of hospital workers.

APHA CEO Michael Roff said the move was 'essential' to ensure the health and safety of hospital workers, patients and visitors as well as preserving the capacity of the hospital system going forward.

"The first step is for National Cabinet to seek urgent advice from Australian Health Protection Principal Committee on mandating COVID-19 vaccination for hospital workers nationally, including identifying a limited range of exceptions such as medical contraindications to vaccination.

"Private hospitals also call on jurisdictions experiencing a Delta outbreak to rapidly follow New South Wales' lead and mandate vaccinations for their health care workforce.

"The mobilisation of a huge health workforce to respond to COVID-19 while at the same time continuing provision of essential hospital services has relied on the cooperation of both the public and private health sectors and the willingness of healthcare workers and clinicians to step forward for difficult and sometimes dangerous work."

Hospitals and health services have also been particularly vulnerable to outbreaks causing the furlough of many thousands of staff resulting in a reduction in health system capacity at a time when it is most needed he said.

"Despite private hospitals being denied the capacity to vaccinate their own staff, many hospital providers are doing everything they can to increase vaccination rates amongst the health work force. However, the sector needs the support and commitment of the National Cabinet to achieve full vaccination of this essential workforce.

"Clear communications, deliberate planning and coordination will be required so the level of vaccination required can be achieved in all parts of the hospital sector."

Mr Roff said in addition to setting specific dates by which all clinical and non-clinical workers in the hospital sector will be required to have received first and second doses of vaccine, APHA was calling on the Commonwealth, states and territories to prioritise access to and administration of a choice of vaccines to hospital workers.

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