

Air New Zealand wants to expand mandatory vaccinations to thousands of its employees.



Jobs and jobs

**69%**

of firms want Covid-19 vaccinations to be mandatory for their current and future staff

**74%**

say a person's vaccination status will affect their hiring choice;

**76%**

say vaccinations should be mandatory for all industries, not just 'high-risk'

**61%**

want all visitors and contractors to their business vaccinated

**65%**

want supply chain workers fully vaccinated

**9%**

not concerned about whether a job candidate has been vaccinated

# Businesses favour mandatory jobs

Survey shows most are unlikely to enforce vaccinations without clear Govt guidance

Jamie Gray

**B**usinesses want mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations in all industries, regardless of whether they are deemed high risk, according to a survey from law firm Simpson Grierson.

The survey also said businesses would take a person's vaccination status into account when making hiring decisions.

But while the findings show a clear majority of businesses would like to make jobs mandatory for employees, survey respondents said they are unlikely to do so in the absence of clear guidance from the Government.

Simpson Grierson employment partner John Rooney said it was a challenging time for Kiwi employers eager to have their staff fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

But without Government legislation on the matter, they may face possible legal challenges from staff.

This week's Government announcement mandating vaccination for staff in the health and education sector indicates that some guidance for employers from the Government may be on the way, Rooney said.

Auckland Business Chamber chief executive Michael Barnett said then the mandatory vaccination for those workers was a principle that should hold for all workplaces striving to keep their employees and customers safe and healthy.

"If 'no job, no job' is to be the rule for selected people-facing services by government order, then it certainly is a principle that business owners would welcome also by government

order, as well as enabling urgent access to rapid testing technologies to better manage and reduce risks."

The survey showed 69 per cent of respondents want Covid-19 jobs to be mandatory for both their current and future employees.

Simpson Grierson said 74 per cent of employers confirmed that a person's vaccination status would affect their hiring choice.

Just over three-quarters of respondents said vaccinations should be

mandatory for all industries, not just those that are considered "high-risk", such as health or border workers.

The survey said 61 per cent of bosses want all visitors and contractors to their business vaccinated, while 65 per cent want supply chain workers fully vaccinated.

Only 9 per cent of employers said they were not concerned about whether a candidate has been jabbed, which suggests it may become increasingly hard for unvaccinated people to obtain new employment.

"Our survey fielded a large number

of comments from employers expressing concerns about the possibility of losing staff if they were to make vaccinations compulsory and worried about unfairly discriminating against employees who are not vaccinated, whether that is due to personal beliefs or medical reasons," Rooney said.

"In the absence of a government mandate, it is still open to employers to stipulate that certain roles can only be undertaken by employees who are vaccinated.

"However, it is recommended that any decision to do so follows a risk assessment, consultation with employees and any relevant unions, and considers alternatives to dismissal in relation to employees who decline vaccination."

The survey was conducted over five days this month, with responses from 219 employer clients.

Already some businesses are moving towards requiring vaccinations for staff in addition to those required by the Government to get the job.

Air New Zealand last month said extending the requirement to thousands of others not covered by government orders made sense, to ensure the wellbeing of the workforce.

It entered consultation to expand the requirement for mandatory vaccination to include all workers who interact with customers or their baggage, and those who are required to come into the workplace when public health measures require working

from home where possible. This totals about 4100 more staff.

This would be in addition to the 2300 roles already covered by the Government's vaccination order which covers certain groups of staff in airports, cabin crew, pilots, and supply chain who are required to be fully vaccinated by early November.

And Auckland Airport said it will hire only vaccinated staff in future and existing frontline staff without the job face losing their jobs.

It has drafted new employment contracts for any future staff to include a vaccine requirement.