



## COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

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## COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

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### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

COVID-19 vaccination helps to protect the health and wellbeing of all Many Rivers workers, their families and our partners communities. This policy is aligned with Many Rivers' vision to Close the Gap in Aboriginal Wellbeing through housing, partnerships and community development.

### 2. PURPOSE

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- (a) mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace and avoid a COVID-19 related injury or illness to any worker or any person in the community;
- (b) ensure the health of workers and the ability to provide a safe working environment;
- (c) ensure safety measures and safe systems of work are implemented to eliminate or prevent COVID-19 related illness or injury of workers in the workplace;
- (d) comply with our work health and safety obligations; and
- (e) ensure workers also comply with the work health and safety obligations.

### 3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all Many Rivers' prospective and current employees, directors, officers, contractors, volunteers, suppliers, and consultants ("workers").
- 3.2 This Policy does not form part of any person's contract of employment or agreement.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

**Workers:** prospective and current employees, directors, officers, contractors, volunteers, suppliers, and consultants

**Partner communities:** Communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, where Many Rivers delivers property management services.

### 5. COVID-19 VACCINATION

- 5.1 Many Rivers has adopted a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy to maintain a workplace that, so far as is reasonably practicable, is free of recognised hazards and to safeguard the health and safety of our workers, partner communities, and visitors.
- 5.2 Many Rivers recognises COVID-19 creates health and safety risks in the workplace. We understand that vaccination is a measure that may reduce risks associated with COVID-19 in the workplace.
- 5.3 This policy sets out Many Rivers' approach to COVID-19 vaccinations for workers. This Policy relates to Many Rivers and, where relevant, operates in conjunction with other policies, procedures and an employee's contract of employment or a person's agreement.

- 5.4 This policy is based on guidance provided by the Australian Government Coronavirus (COVID-19) website, Safe Work Australia and other federal, state and territory government websites that are updated frequently. Many Rivers has also consulted with workers and their representatives about the creation of this policy and its implementation.
- 5.5 While we will try to keep this policy up-to-date, workers must take steps to familiarise themselves with the relevant government guidance and check regularly for updates.

## **6. WHY WE CONSIDER COVID-19 VACCINATION IS IMPORTANT**

- 6.1 COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on all our lives and on how we operate as an organisation. Catching COVID-19 can be serious, particularly for those with underlying health conditions.
- 6.2 Based on the reported experience of countries with high rates of infection, there may also be risks of long term COVID-19 side effects even for those persons who initially only have mild symptoms.
- 6.3 You may also have COVID-19 without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends and colleagues or community members, some of whom are at increased risk from the disease. Being healthy does not reduce your risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on.
- 6.4 At Many Rivers there is an operational need because some partner communities have requested that only fully vaccinated people work in their community.
- 6.5 As a worker, you must take reasonable steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19 to keep you, your colleagues, and other persons safe and healthy in our workplace.
- 6.6 The Australian government have said that:
- a) Vaccines form part of their strategies to manage COVID-19;
  - b) Vaccination means that fewer people will get COVID-19 and those that do are far less likely to be hospitalised or to die;
  - c) Not all of those offered the vaccine will take it up, and there are some groups (such as children) for whom the vaccine is not yet authorised or who are not able to be vaccinated for legitimate reasons including medical conditions;
  - d) Even if you are vaccinated, you may still contract the virus and pass it on; and
  - e) No available vaccine is 100% effective at preventing COVID-19 and, like all viruses, COVID-19 may mutate which may reduce the effectiveness of any available vaccination.
- 6.7 Many Rivers recognises that vaccination is not an immediate or total solution to the risks of COVID-19. However, we believe vaccination is an important control measure to prevent a serious COVID-19 illness and injury.
- 6.8 We also hope that the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination policy will help Many Rivers work more safely within our partner communities and give greater confidence to communities that they can engage with us safely.

## **7. COVID-19 VACCINATION CONDITION**

- 7.1 We have considered vaccination as part of our COVID-19 risk assessment.

- 7.2 Many Rivers provides services to vulnerable people and communities. Our workers are required to work in contact with colleagues, tenants and community members, in the course of their work.
- 7.3 Many Rivers requires all workers to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 unless the worker has an approved medical exemption.
- 7.4 All workers must continue to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and take all the necessary steps to ensure they keep up to date and comply with the Australian government recommendations regarding the vaccination(s) such as booster injections.
- 7.5 All workers are solely responsible for scheduling and obtaining all recommended doses of the COVID-19 vaccination.
- 7.6 New workers will be informed of the vaccination requirement in their offer letter and will be required to be fully vaccinated and show documentation of their vaccination or receive an approved medical exemption prior to their first day of work.
- 7.7 All current workers must receive at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination and provide proof of their second dose appointment within two (2) weeks of the effective date of this policy, unless an approved exemption by Many Rivers applies. All workers must be fully vaccinated within eight (8) weeks of the effective date of this policy, unless an approved exemption by Many Rivers applies.

## **8. VACCINE SAFETY**

- 8.1 If you have concerns or questions about vaccine safety, we recommend that you speak to your medical practitioner.
- 8.2 You can also find accurate and up-to-date information about COVID-19 vaccines from official government sources, such as the Australian Department of Health website:  
<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>.

## **9. TIME OFF FOR VACCINATION**

- 9.1 Employees are entitled to attend vaccination appointments during work hours, subject to you providing us with notice and requested evidence before you attend that appointment.
- 9.2 If an employee experiences side effects after their vaccination and are not well enough to work, they can take accrued paid personal/carer's leave in accordance with our policies.

## **10. LIVING AND WORKING WITH COVID-19**

- 10.1 It is important to remember that even if you, your colleagues, and community members are vaccinated, there is a continuing risk that you may still get or spread coronavirus. The vaccines do not provide 100% protection. Additional risk mitigations set out in our WHS Handbook continue to apply to all workers (whether vaccinated or not) for the foreseeable future. For example, all workers must continue to physically distance, follow good hygiene, wear face masks when required and not come to work if unwell.
- 10.2 It is unlawful to bully, harass or victimise any worker in relation to their vaccination choice. We take any such behaviour seriously. Anyone who acts in this way towards another worker may be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal or termination of engagement.

## **11. COVID-19 VACCINATION EXEMPTION REQUESTS**

- 11.1 In accordance with all federal, state, and local rules and regulations, Many Rivers recognises that there may be certain circumstances preventing a worker from receiving the COVID-19 vaccination consistent with this Policy.
- 11.2 Any worker in need of an exemption from a provision of this Policy due to a medical reason must provide Many Rivers with a true copy of a valid medical contraindication certificate or any other evidence as requested by Many Rivers.
- 11.3 An approved medical exemption from the vaccination requirement in this Policy, may be granted by Many Rivers where we are required by law to recognise it.
- 11.4 A medically exempted worker will be permitted to continue to work provided Many Rivers determines they can perform the inherent requirements of their position without being vaccinated against COVID-19 and their work would not pose an unreasonable risk to the health and safety of others, including Many Rivers workers, tenants and community members.
- 11.5 Please note that an exemption request does not automatically excuse a worker from the requirements of this Policy.

## **12. EVIDENCE**

- 12.1 Many Rivers reserves the right to require proof of vaccination documentation from its workers and will treat any such record or documentation as confidential.
- 12.2 All collection and use of personal or sensitive information will be handled in accordance with Many Rivers' Privacy Policy.
- 12.3 Many Rivers may request to sight or collect a copy of satisfactory evidence of your continued compliance with your vaccination against COVID-19. This may include a certified copy of the worker's immunisation history statement, which may be obtained from Services Australia and or other evidence as directed by Many Rivers.
- 12.4 Any worker that requests a medical condition exemption from this Policy must provide a valid contraindication medical certificate and or any other evidence as requested by Many Rivers.
- 12.5 Providing false or unsatisfactory evidence of your continued compliance with your vaccination against COVID-19 may result in disciplinary action and may include the termination of your employment.

## **13. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY**

- 13.1 A failure to comply with this Policy by an employee may lead to disciplinary action including termination of employment.
- 13.2 A failure to comply with this Policy by a contractor may lead to the termination of their agreement.
- 13.3 A failure to comply with this Policy by a volunteer may lead to the relationship ending.

## **14. AMENDMENTS OF THIS POLICY**

- 14.1 We will continue to review vaccination requirements in our ongoing COVID-19 risk assessments and we may need to review this policy if, for example, our risk assessments, government guidance or customer requirements change.
- 14.2 This policy may be amended or withdrawn at Many Rivers' discretion.

## **15. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006

Public Health (COVID-19 General) Order 2021

Work, Health and Safety Act 2011

Work, Health and Safety Regulations 2011

Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)

Fair Work Regulations 2009 (Cth)

Many Rivers' WHS Handbook.