

22 November 2021

Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister
Via email j.ardern@ministers.govt.nz

Tena koe Prime Minister

Mandating COVID-19 Vaccines for large industrial sites

The Wood Processors and Manufactures Association (WPMA) represents New Zealand's sawmills, fibre board manufacturers, pulp and paper facilities and other wood processing operations. Many of our members operate large industrial sites, including some of the largest sites in the country.

The industry strongly supports the Government's efforts to manage the COVID-19 pandemic in this country. We accept the combination of aggressive vaccination targets and public health measures as the right approach for protecting our hospitals and vulnerable New Zealanders. Vaccination mandates are an essential part of the policy mix and WPMA understands the Government is working on measures to expand the scope of Public Health Orders and a new prescribed risk assessment process for businesses to follow.

WPMA accepts further measures on vaccine mandates will improve the current situation. However, we believe it is essential the Government provide explicit direction to businesses as much as possible. WPMA's members do not want to be put in the position of having to make judgements about what is primarily a public health issue. We therefore have concerns about a potential risk assessment process which may merely enable vaccine mandate decisions within our businesses, rather than a direction from Government via a public health process. It is of paramount importance that our members do not run the risk of being in breach of any employment or human rights legislation by any decisions they make when applying an enabled vaccine mandate process.

Many of our members operate large industrial sites, some are the largest in the Country, with many people interacting on a day-to-day basis. Several of our member's operations are essential services, and many operate within small provincial communities with a significantly high Māori workforce where vaccination rates appear to be low. We consider our operations are part of the potentially vulnerable communities and questions about vaccinations encompass issues beyond the scope of our businesses. Very clearly this process requires government leadership by making the application of an enabled vaccine mandate process legally enforceable through Public Health Orders.

We would be happy to provide more information or to speak to you if this was necessary.

Heoi ano



Brian Stanley
Chairman, WPMA

Cc:

Hon Grant Robertson, Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon Kelvin Davis, Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti.

Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response.

Hon Michael Wood, Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety.

Hon Andrew Little, Minister of Health.

Hon David Parker, Attorney General.

Hon Damien O'Connor, Minister for Rural Communities.

Hon Stuart Nash, Minister for Economic Development.