



**SURF LIFE SAVING®**  
NEW ZEALAND

**Date:** 25 May 2022

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**To:** All Clubs and Members

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**From:** Paul Dalton, CEO

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**Subject:** Vaccine Mandate for the Role of Surf Lifeguard

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## Background

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January this year SLSNZ mandated vaccination for:

- Paid surf lifeguards
- All surf lifeguards who are active SAR Squad members
- All surf lifeguards who are Beach Education instructors
- All volunteer lifeguards, including Patrol Support (and rookies)

This followed a review of all relevant legislation including the Government Health Order, Health & Safety at Work Act and a rigorous risk assessment as recommended by WorkSafe NZ. At the time we were all dealing with the Delta variant of COVID 19, and possible community spread.

Most of our membership are now highly vaccinated, and we thank you for taking this important action to protect yourself and your fellow members.

As the COVID 19 Protection framework setting has dropped to Orange and Government have removed most restrictions and mandates we have now reviewed our position in relation to COVID 19 and the Omicron variant now in the community.

## Workplace Risk Assessment

The Workplace Risk Assessment has been redone, and in light of the current situation and experience with the Omicron variant the conclusion reached this time is that mandated vaccination is no longer generally required in the surf life saving environment.

## Legislation

While we are not technically health practitioners listed in the "[Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003](#)" we do work with some included in this Act. While these people remain mandated to be fully vaccinated we will need to ensure anyone working with these people, e.g. Paramedics, is fully vaccinated to the definition contained in the "[COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Vaccinations\) Order 2021](#), Schedule 3 and 4".

Alternatively the time exposed to a "Health Practitioner can be managed to ensure the exposure definition contained in schedule 2, Item 7.2 of the "[COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Vaccinations\) Order 2021](#) is maintained. This means an unvaccinated lifeguard should not be within 2m of a health practitioner for more than 15 minutes.

Because these situations are relatively rare we believe these can be managed on a case-by-case basis by clubs, rather than requiring all lifeguards to be fully vaccinated to cover every possible eventuality. This was discussed with Club Chairs at the recent national meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May and there was strong support to go down this pathway for the 2022/23 season.

*In it for life*



FINANCIAL SERVICES



## **New Position**

***From the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 the requirement for all Surf lifeguards, Patrol support, Rookies and Beach Education Instructors to be fully vaccinated and supply evidence of this to SLSNZ is removed.***

The need to ensure fully vaccinated lifeguards are used in circumstances where they are within 2 metres of a 'health practitioner' for a period of more than 15 minutes will be up to clubs to manage (or SLSNZ/ NR in where Paid Lifeguards are on duty).

## **Staying Safe in the future**

While the mandate is removed, SLSNZ still **strongly recommends lifeguards remain fully vaccinated** by getting booster vaccinations as required. The risk of infection remains high as is the potential for serious harm.

Good health practices are also really important while the Omicron variant is in the community. Mask wearing and hygiene practices should continue. We strongly encourage everyone to continue the use of appropriate face masks in crowded indoor environments and work in well ventilated space where appropriate.

The risk of more dangerous strains of COVID 19 arriving in New Zealand is a real possibility. For that reason, we remain prepared to reintroduce safety measures that protect our members and the public in future.

To ensure we have incorporated the learning from the pandemic so far, we will produce a First Aid NSOP to incorporate basic and ongoing protection measures into our standard practice where infectious disease risk could be higher. This will upgrade our current use of PPE such as gloves to include appropriate masks and well-ventilated space.

We appreciate that you may have questions about this decision, if so please send them to [covid.support@surflifesaving.org.nz](mailto:covid.support@surflifesaving.org.nz) and we will respond to you as soon as possible.



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