

## **Feedback on vaccination mandates – November 2021**

The quarry sector support and encourage vaccinations. We also support a robust risk assessment process for all H&S risks including those associated with Covid. We support proposed legislation to allow employers to mandate vaccination for workers, contractors, and visitors to their sites following a risk assessment.

The following is our submission on questions asked in the COVID-19 vaccination and workplaces- key utilities PowerPoint:

### **Risk Assessment Framework (slides 4 – 8)**

The extractives sector currently uses robust Risk Assessment (RA) processes required under the Health & Safety at Work Act and Mining and Quarrying Regulations. These processes involve worker engagement (including unions where appropriate) and is similar to the process proposed in Option 1 (slide 5) .

We support the use of a RA similar to Option 1. Some sites have trialled this and scores for their operations are in the 2 – 3 range. It would be appropriate to mandate vaccinations if the risk score exceeded 6, however there should be scope for sites that determine the risk is unacceptable at any score without vaccinations, to be able to mandate vaccinations.

The work environment parameters should allow for density as a number of buildings used in the quarry sector would be less than 100m<sup>2</sup> in area but have a small number of distanced workers. As an example, one quarry uses a converted house as their office. It is less than 100m<sup>2</sup> in area however houses 3 workers, each within their own office.

Risk assessments should include all controls around the Covid hazards, not only vaccinations.

### **Additional vaccination mandates (slides 10-11)**

We agree that critical utilities should be mandated to protect services for the country. Critical utilities are those which are necessary for people to maintain basic health and safety at home. Essential services such as water, power, police etc. are required to maintain public health and safety.

We believe a mandate for critical utilities would still be necessary, even if a RA framework produced the same outcome, but only in cases where Covid exposure could cause catastrophic outcomes for the sector (i.e. critical utilities). In all other cases the RA should suffice.

We do not support a mandate differentiating between frontline work and other work areas as this would create tension and division within the workplace. If there was a differentiation it would make it more challenging for individuals/teams to travel/work between different parts of a business without causing possible rifts.

A number of quarries have operated as essential services with adequate controls in communities with low vaccination rates. We are therefore confident that we could allow exceptions/exemptions in emergency situations only, provided a risk assessment has established appropriate alternative controls to reduce risk of exposure to as low as reasonably practicable. An example here could be maintenance after hours on an unmanned site.