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# Able Australia offering Tasmanian staff \$50 cash bonus for getting Covid-19 vaccine

With there being no mandate for disability workers to get vaccinated against Covid-19, some not-for-profit providers feel they have no choice but to pay their staff to get the jab.

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A disability care provider has started offering financial incentives to its Tasmanian staff to encourage them to get vaccinated against Covid-19, as the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee considers whether to mandate vaccinations for workers in the sector.

Able Australia is offering \$50 payments to its fully vaccinated employees in Victoria, Queensland, the ACT and Tasmania.

People with disability are particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 and yet the federal government hasn't mandated vaccinations for disability workers, despite it being a requirement for aged care staff.

Jennifer Oak, Able Australia's Tasmanian area manager, said it would be preferable if the jab was mandatory for workers in the sector.

"While it's not mandatory at the moment, we're trying everything to encourage staff (to get vaccinated)," she said.

"I believe that we're in a really active space of promoting it. It is voluntary so we can't force people to do it. But we can definitely encourage people where we can."

Ms Oak said the not-for-profit provider had observed an increase in vaccinated staff since the financial incentive was introduced.



Able Australia Area Manager of Tasmania Community Jennifer Oak. Picture: Chris Kidd

“We are supporting people with compromised immune systems,” she said. “Not only that, we’ve also got people who are elderly and they’ve got elderly parents coming in to visit, as well.”

“And so it’s really great to know and be rest assured that our staff members are taking it seriously, Able’s taking it seriously; we’re doing everything in our power to support people – not just our participants but also our staff.”

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Meanwhile, Burnie-based disability care provider Coastal Residential Service has managed to increase its staff vaccination rate to 90 per cent just through strict messaging.

“It shouldn’t be up to not-for-profits and disability providers to incentivise staff to get vaccinated but this is what it has come to due to the lack of direction from the government,” Coastal Residential Service chief executive Dee-Anne Kapene said.

“Not only should the government be mandating the vaccination of support workers in the disability sector, much like they have done for aged care, but the vaccination process and communication for support workers should be much clearer.”



Able Australia Area Manager of Tasmania Community Jennifer Oak. Picture: Chris Kidd

NDIS Minister Linda Reynolds strongly encouraged all disability workers to get vaccinated “as soon as possible”.

“The Morrison government, along with states and territories, has established a significant number of vaccination channels for disability workers,” Senator Reynolds said. “This includes more than 5700 primary health care sites, and over 600 state and territory government operated vaccination clinics.”

“National Cabinet has agreed to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee’s (AHPPC) advice encouraging residential disability support

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workers to be vaccinated as soon as possible. The AHPPC is considering mandating vaccination for disability workers by 31 October 2021."

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Senator Reynolds said that of Tasmania's 2673 screened disability workers, 62.5 per cent had received one vaccine dose – compared to the national average of 58 per cent – and 49 per cent were fully vaccinated.



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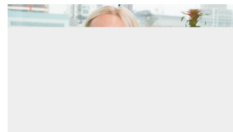
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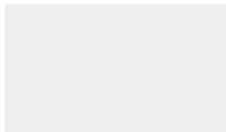
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