

Date: 19 November 2021

To: All Clubs and Members

From: Paul Dalton, CEO

Subject: Vaccine Mandate for the Role of Surf Lifeguard

For some weeks SLSNZ has been working with our Medical Director, the Ministry of Health and other agencies to determine the need for the role of a surf lifeguard (including Patrol Support) to be undertaken only by people who are fully vaccinated.

We have reached the conclusion that they should be, and this memo is to make this announcement.

The reasons for this are:

- **Lifeguards are covered in the most recent Health Order**, which mandates vaccines for:

"Workers who carry out work where health services are provided to members of the public by one or more health practitioners and whose role involves being within two metres or less of a health practitioner or a member of the public for a period of 15 minutes or more".

While this is not something that all lifeguards do every day, the potential exists at any time on patrol for every lifeguard to be involved in a serious first aid incident that will require working alongside ambulance or other paramedic/ medical personnel for an extended period. This is what we train lifeguards for, and many of us obtain formal first aid qualifications for this task.

The fact that our primary role is drowning prevention means we are more than likely to be dealing with patients requiring CPR or having issues with their airways, this increases both the risk of exposure to Covid-19 and the negative consequences for the patient if a lifeguard were to infect them in a time when their lung function was already severely compromised.

Reinforcing this has been feedback from ambulance providers, where their expectation is that surf lifeguards will be fully vaccinated. In many rural or remote locations our lifeguards can be the primary first aid responders, and during incidents on and off the beach assist extensively with ambulance staff and at times rescue helicopter paramedics, who we have a duty of care not to infect.

- **Our Risk Assessment of the role indicates vaccines are a necessary protection measure.** This has followed the advice of our legal advisors and the WorkSafe NZ Risk Assessment process. A copy of which is attached.



In it for life

- **Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 2015 we have a duty of care** to both our volunteers and members of the public, in particular:

- (1) A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of-
 - (a) Workers who work for the PCBU, while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking; and
 - (b) Workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the PCBU, while the workers are carrying out the work.
- (2) A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other persons are not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

- **Common sense** will tell us that:

- Through their role, which requires proactive and reactive interactions with the public, surf lifeguards are more at risk than the general population of exposure to Covid-19;
- We should take all practical steps to ensure we don't pass on Covid-19 to any people we rescue to treat for first aid;
- The general public will have an expectation that all surf lifeguards providing their normal service (with the potential to provide them or their family member with mouth to mouth resuscitation) will be fully vaccinated;
- With vaccinated lifeguards there is less chance of patrols having to be stood down and our service capability to the public impacted; and
- In the worst-case scenario where infections do occur:
 - Vaccinated lifeguards are much less likely to spread the virus than unvaccinated lifeguards;
 - Vaccinated lifeguards are contagious for a much shorter time than unvaccinated lifeguards (typically 3 days versus 10 days);
 - Vaccinated lifeguards are less likely to suffer severe health consequences or hospitalisation when infected than those who are not vaccinated.

To date SLSNZ has already mandated the following roles can only be undertaken by fully vaccinated people:

- Paid surf lifeguards
- All surf lifeguards who are active SAR Squad members
- All surf lifeguards who are Beach Education instructors

We are now announcing that this mandate is now being extended to **all volunteer surf lifeguards (including Patrol Support)**. We fully understand that this may not be supported by everyone but can assure you that the SLSNZ Board and management have not taken this decision lightly.

Implementation

Driven by the Government Health Order, all lifeguards will need to be fully vaccinated by the **1st of January 2022** if they wish to continue patrolling. Once both your COVID-19 vaccinations are completed and you have a formal Record of Vaccination, records need to be submitted for entry into PAM.

This can be done by either submitting a registered record of your Vaccination Certificate to SLSNZ directly to adminstration@surflifesaving.org.nz.

Your clubs may already have this on file and will wish to submit your Vaccination Records in bulk to the adminstration@surflifesaving.org.nz email address.

Once loaded onto PAM, your vaccination status will be subject to normal privacy settings as per other awards loaded onto PAM.

Note: When the Government processes are up and running properly we will give Club Admins the ability to directly load Vaccination Records, further instructions will be out in early December around

this.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Dalton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Paul Dalton
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