

5 November 2023

To: Medical Officers of Health and others who it will concern

Tēnā koutou

We are writing to offer our sincere thanks for your hard work in supporting immunisation in these challenging times and inform you about several system level changes underway that will support that work.

Significant changes are underway in the health system, driven by the experiences of the COVID-19 response and the recent recommendations of the Immunisation Taskforce. These changes range from simple to complex and will have an impact on the way Medical Officers of Health (MOoH) authorise vaccinators in their regions.

The Aotearoa Immunisation Register (AIR) and the new Therapeutic Products Act will enable further change in support of the Immunisation Taskforce recommendations to remove barriers and support the vaccinating workforce.

**The Therapeutic Products Act 2023 will enable changes to authorisation regulations.**

The Therapeutic Products Act (TPA) was passed in July 2023 and will replace the Medicines Act when it comes into effect by 1 September 2026. In that intervening period, we will revise the regulations supporting safe vaccine use and workforce education, taking into account the challenges and experiences of the COVID-19 response. We now have the opportunity to address many of barriers raised by the previous legislation, and we encourage MOoH and others to be involved in consultation on new regulations.

**The Vaccinator Authorisation Portal will support national consistency.**

With the regulation changes in mind, Te Whatu Ora Prevention is enhancing the Vaccinator Authorisation Portal (the portal) to support a national authorisation process and vaccinator register.

The first stage of the portal enhancement will go live in March 2024 and support new vaccinator authorisations and two-yearly reauthorisation, including Vaccinating Health Workers (VHWs), which are currently authorised nationally by a MOoH employed by Te Whatu Ora.

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Other enhancements include automated recall reminders to the vaccinator, reminders when update training is due, and the ability for a MOoH to suspend or revoke an authorisation.

The portal will include a national register function for regulated vaccinators; VHWs, Fully Authorised Vaccinators (FAVs) and Pharmacist vaccinators, registering their vaccination training and requirements e.g., APC. Later, the register will be open to other vaccinator types, e.g., midwives.

Introducing the vaccinator authorisation portal is a process change to achieve national consistency and is the foundation for a wider register of vaccinators. We recognise that creating a national process is a shift from the long standing, relatively autonomous process that MOoH have guided with care for many years. It isn't changing the MOoH decision making on authorisation, nor reducing powers available in an outbreak response. However, we want to standardise conditions across the country so as to provide flexibility for individual vaccinators to work throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Vaccinators will be authorised to vaccinate anywhere in Aotearoa New Zealand.**

In 2021, as part of the pandemic response, the previous authorisation limit to the local public health unit region was temporarily removed by the Director of Public Health to enable a more mobile vaccinating workforce. This arrangement will be maintained while existing vaccinators move to the portal for authorisation. Over a two-year period starting in March 2024, as existing vaccinator authorisations expire and are renewed via the portal, the entire regulated workforce will become authorised to work across the motu, making the temporary arrangement no longer required. All new vaccinators authorised through the portal will be able to vaccinate nationally as well.

### **Online vaccinator training will be free for participants.**

Our COVID-19 training investment has enabled IMAC to fund a new learning management system and expand access. By February 2024, all online training will be free to participants, including foundational and update courses available to pharmacist vaccinators, fully authorised vaccinators, as well as the vaccinating health worker training modules. While midwives don't require post-graduate training to vaccinate, midwife vaccinator courses support sector capability and assurance, and midwife vaccinator courses will also be free to participants.

### **Vaccinating workforce training and support services are being redesigned.**

We are looking at other ways to simplify and streamline vaccinator training, including redesigning how training is delivered, to support vaccinator choice and ensure training options reflect Te Tiriti commitments and Wai 2575 principles. This will increase the options available to training participants.

Overseas models are being considered for the clinical and practical assessment to occur within vaccinator training, complemented by the addition of organised, sector-wide peer vaccinator preceptorship. We're also exploring how vaccinator training could be included in tertiary level undergraduate curricula for nurses, pharmacists, and others over the longer term.

Our aim throughout these changes is to improve arrangements for the vaccinator workforce and meet the growing demand for timely, quality whānau-centred vaccination experiences. We know well prepared vaccinators have the time and knowledge to engage with whānau, address their concerns about vaccines, and share prevention advice.

The Prevention Directorate of the National Public Health Service will be providing more information to the sector on the details of these changes and timeframes for implementation. We appreciate your ongoing support and engagement in this process – if you have any comments or questions, please get in touch directly at [Prevention@health.govt.nz](mailto:Prevention@health.govt.nz).

Mā te wā



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