

# **Sisters of Compassion Group Covid-19 Policy Document**

## Summary of Changes

Version	Date	Section/ Appendix	Summary of Changes
0.1	02 November 2021		Initial Policy Created
0.2	16 November 2021		Final Draft (after consultation)
0.3	22 November 2021		Mandate extended to contractors – no services Island Bay – and closing of Hiruhārama.
0.4	24 November 2021		Amendment for Courier services – drop-and-run provision

## Document Approval

<b>Date: Provisional</b>	November 2021
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# Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Throughout her life Suzanne Aubert – Meri Hōhepa strove to provide practical support in developing effective health solutions for individuals and communities alike. From her training as a nurse, the development of herbal medicines to the establishment of the hospital at Island Bay, the provision of medically proven treatments to those who may not have otherwise received such care was of paramount consideration to Meri Hōhepa. To this day, we maintain a deep commitment to our enduring values in everything we do; Divine Providence, Simplicity, Action with the poor, Justice and Partnerships. With a clear understanding of our tūrangawaewae, we stand in solidarity with our community for the protection of all people. It is with this sense of place and community that we support a vaccine mandate whilst ensuring those in need do no miss out and on the shelter they so desperately require.

## 1.2 Background

The New Zealand Government has responded to the global COVID-19 pandemic with a range of public health initiatives.

The Government's goal is to get everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand aged 12 and over vaccinated against COVID-19.

The vaccine that is currently available in New Zealand is the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

Recognizing that some people are at higher risk of coming into contact with the virus or, because of their age or health status, are more likely to experience poorer outcomes if they do fall ill with COVID-19, the vaccine has been progressively rolled out to people, depending on which one of four groups they are in.

On 11 October 2021, the New Zealand Government announced that health and disability workers will be required to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 under the *COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021* ("the Order").

The Order is a legally binding health instruction which requires certain groups of health and disability workers to be vaccinated in order to undertake certain work.

On 26 October 2021 the New Zealand Government issued a press release titled 'Government backs businesses to vaccinate workforces'. In this release it is noted that the Government is introducing a range of measures to help protect workplaces and workers from Covid-19. This includes a new law to introduce a clearer and simplified risk assessment process for employers to follow when deciding whether they can require vaccination for different types of work.

As of the date of this policy this law has not yet been passed into legislation.

Also on 26 October 2021 the Government announced that Cabinet had decided to mandate vaccination in all places where a vaccine was required. Under the new Covid-19 Protection Framework the Prime Minister noted that this included "hospitality, events, gyms, and close proximity businesses ..."

In terms of our operation, it is reasonable to classify OLHOC Island Bay as a hospitality complex. So too, the Compassion Soup Kitchen and our accommodation provision at Hiruhārama. Finally the non-nursing service of Compassion Housing is not covered by the impending mandate order. In relation to Compassion Housing, it is the only aspect of our entire operation that requires an individualised risk assessment before a mandate can be established (if deemed an appropriate response to the level of risk identified).

We at the Sisters of Compassion Group operate a number of services with varying needs and risks. St Joseph's elder care facility for example, is covered by the Health & Disability Workers Order mandating vaccination. In the context of St Joseph's we will look with interest to the new rules enabling the giving of 4-weeks notice of vaccination or termination of employment.

At its October meeting, the Sisters of Compassion Group Board gave the CE direction on establishing a vaccination mandate for the Group as a whole. At a general level the Board was unanimous on the need for vaccination of all staff and volunteers and users of our facilities. This general indication is tempered with the

legal requirements and ability of each service to practically implement a vaccination mandate for the various groups it engages with – from staff to visitors.

With this clear direction from our Board, this policy outlines the objectives and, in-principle considerations that need to be kept in mind when undertaking an assessment of risk and mitigation of that risk for staff, volunteers and all users of our services and facilities. As such it is at a broad level of abstraction and as a policy, stops short of outlining the processes at play. Those processes however, are to be developed at service level for each subsidiary in the context of their own operation, staff profile, identification of possible vulnerable people and their practical ability to mitigate such risk. From this, the requirement of a mandate for vaccination may or may not result. This said, for most of our service areas a mandated vaccination requirement has been established by Government. It is therefore only Compassion Housing that is left with the task of individual risk assessment and consideration of whether a mandate is required.

### 1.3 Purpose

This policy is designed for managers, staff and volunteers to better understand the obligations of the Group as a whole in terms of protection from infection of Covid-19 and the expectations of the Chief Executive of the procedures to be followed in mitigating that risk. As a policy, it is intended to provide clarity and to ensure a continuity of approach albeit differing conclusions across all branches might result.

In this document, Government guidelines for health and disability workers is addressed first as these cover both St Joseph's and the work of the nursing services as part of Compassion Housing. It is acknowledged that such workers and working environments represent the most clear circumstance of where vulnerable people exist and are in need of protection.

This policy is a so-called 'living document' and will therefore be subject to regular updating and amendment. The date and scope of any update will be accounted for under the table at the start of this document. In all respects we strive to ensure that this policy complies with the legislative requirements of New Zealand law at all times.

## Support for Employees & Volunteers

### 2.1 Supporting workers & volunteers to get vaccinated

Fully vaccinated employees and volunteers will help keep our workplaces safe from COVID-19. We will help our employees and volunteers make an informed decision and encourage them and their whānau to get the COVID-19 vaccine by:

- allowing them time off to get the vaccine
- talking to them about their leave and pay entitlements if they need time off to go to their appointment or if they feel unwell after getting the vaccine
- talking to them about the safety of the vaccine, and how getting vaccinated will help create a safe and healthy workplace for everyone
- respecting their privacy
- listening to their concerns.

Our employees and volunteers may have questions about the vaccine. We will help them find out more by:

- directing them to official sources for accurate and up-to-date information, including:
  - the Ministry of Health website
  - Karawhuia – information for whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities
- checking everyone can access the information if they need it.

**All worksites are to have resources available and are to display in an accessible place the following PDF resource:** [https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/vaccine\\_toolkit\\_for\\_businesses\\_2021.pdf](https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/vaccine_toolkit_for_businesses_2021.pdf)

This information is also to be sent out to all staff from the Chief Executive.

## 2.2 Support/Warning from Worksafe

In giving guidance to businesses on how to conduct risk assessments and consequent decisions on mandating vaccinations, Worksafe includes the following statement. It is replicated here in full to emphasise the seriousness in which the process of assessment and mitigation is to be conducted.

*We recognise that:*

- *most businesses and services do not have infection control expertise and rely on direction and advice from public health experts*
- *the pace of change in the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented when compared with typical risks to work health and safety, and*
- *for these reasons, it will not always be easy for businesses and services to ‘get things right’.*

*Therefore, our expectation is that to decide whether work requires a vaccinated employee:*

- *you carry out an adequate risk assessment, and*
- *engage effectively with workers and their representatives.*

*Where a business or service can demonstrate it has done this, we will not take prosecution action if we disagree with the decisions you made in your risk assessment. (This only applies to enforcement action within WorkSafe’s responsibilities.) We will instead take an education-first approach, so you understand what is reasonable to require in your circumstances and have the opportunity to act on it.*

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/how-to-decide-what-work-requires-a-vaccinated-employee/>

This said, the requirement for assessment appears to only apply to Compassion Housing and even then, not all components of that operation. The part-time nurses employed by Compassion Housing are rightly covered by the Health & Disability Workers Order as referred to below. In this regard Compassion Housing is therefore to be treated the same as St Joseph’s in that mandated vaccination is required. In terms of the rest of the Compassion Housing operation and assessment of risk and mitigation needs to be conducted – please see below for further information.

As alluded to above and discussed in more detail below, our elder care operation is covered by the Health & Disability Workers Order mandating vaccinations.

## Our Sites of Operation

### 3.1 Contractors, service men and women, third party providers

All contractors, service men and women and third party providers are to be fully vaccinated with boosters as required, as a condition of entry to any of our sites of operation. This includes (but is not limited to), maintenance people, gardeners, builders, plumbers, electricians and systems personnel (fire, IT, photocopier personnel). It also includes delivery personnel for food, mail and couriers only to the extent that delivery staff are likely to linger beyond drop-and-run services. For each site, arrangements for contactless drop-and-run services will be established. Also included are outside catering staff, funeral staff formal and informal delegations, and visiting professional service personnel of any type.

Suitable signage indicating our policy, sign-in procedures and verification of vaccination will be provided at each of our sites of operation.

Exemptions to this section of our policy are strictly confined to government mandated medical exemptions or emergency circumstances where either enforcement of this policy is not possible or desirable such as fire, emergency treatment by ambulance or police staff or to stop or repair a broken service where an immediate fix is required as a matter of urgency to prevent other damage – such as a broken water main – but not to reconnect internet service. Even under these circumstances, enforcement of this policy is to resume as soon as the immediacy of the circumstance forming an exception has passed – i.e. stabilisation of the patient, temporary fix of a burst water main etc.

### 3.1.1 Drop-and-run deliveries

For all drop-and-run deliveries, allowance will be made at each site for contactless delivery meaning that the standard requirements of checking in, vaccination, masks and handwashing need not apply. This will apply to couriers, food delivery and mail delivery and all other delivery services as may reasonably be accommodated by a drop-and-run service.

## 3.2 St Joseph’s Compassion Home & the Nursing Care provided by Compassion Housing

With express reference to the Health & Disability Workers (Affected Persons) order the Government has set out a clear timeframe for vaccination – against which a failure to comply may result in the termination of employment.

	1st dose by 11.59pm on	2nd dose by 11.59pm on
Health & Disability Workers (Affected Persons)	15 November 2021	1 January 2022

Any worker who does not comply with any of the above vaccination deadlines must not work in a role which requires them to be vaccinated under Schedule 2 of the Order.

The Health & Disability Workers (Affected Persons) order applies to all staff employed at St Joseph’s elder care facility and also the part-time nursing care provided through Compassion Housing.

***In addition to staff and volunteers we have decided to mandate vaccination for all visitors to the facility. To do otherwise, and therefore applying a lesser standard to St Joseph’s than to OLHOC Island Bay as a hospitality centre for example, would result in a perverse outcome given the Government mandate for health workers and the significant vulnerability of residents.*** This will require ongoing discussion on a limitation of visiting hours. Currently visiting hours are significantly limited (under the Levels regime). We appreciate very much that this is a curtailment of ability for family and friends to visit their loved ones. However, a full return to the extensive system of visitor hours in operation under normal operating conditions would represent an impossible task of enforcement for the home. Extended but not unrestricted visiting hours will therefore be considered and published.

### 3.2.2 Key responsibilities under the Vaccinations Order

The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities of employers, affected persons, MoH and DHBs under the Order in relation to keeping vaccination records and ensuring only vaccinated workers undertake certain work.

	PCBUs/Employers	Affected persons	MoH/DHBs
In relation to the Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must determine whether a person is a health and disability worker</li> <li>Must assess whether a worker is an affected person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must get vaccinated if they fall into one of the affected groups listed in <a href="#">Table 2</a> (in order to begin, continue or resume working in their present role)</li> <li>Health workers must have had their 1<sup>st</sup> dose by 11.59pm on 15 November 2021 and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose by 11.59pm on 1 January 2022</li> <li>After the dates above, any new workers covered by the Order will need to have their</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoH has developed the COVID-19 Immunisation Register (CIR) to keep records of COVID-19 vaccinations</li> <li>MoH must provide PCBU/employer with worker vaccination status information if Privacy Act</li> </ul>

	PCBUs/Employers	Affected persons	MoH/DHBs
		1 <sup>st</sup> dose before starting work.	obligations have been met
In relation to vaccination records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a safe, confidential way to record the vaccination status of workers covered by this Order</li> <li>• Seek assurance of the vaccination status of affected persons within their responsibility employed by other PCBUs.</li> <li>• Provide factsheets for workers which outline the information that PCBUs will share about them</li> <li>• Ensure the contact details of affected persons are captured before they carry out certain work</li> <li>• Check vaccination status of workers by sighting copies of an individual's COVID-19 immunisation status from My Covid Record or other suitable evidence of vaccination</li> <li>• Maintain records where there is a change of employment status.</li> <li>• Provide accurate worker information to MoH for inclusion in the centralised register if required by MoH</li> <li>• Complete a risk assessment with exempted workers to identify and agree risk mitigations for those workers to continue to do their role safely.</li> <li>• Can contact MoH for advice, support or clarification on: <a href="mailto:healthorders@health.govt.nz">healthorders@health.govt.nz</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive factsheets from employer about the information they will share about workers</li> <li>• Must provide and maintain their contact details (telephone and email address) to their employer</li> <li>• Advise the employer after they have received their first and then second doses of the vaccine</li> <li>• Register on the My Covid Record website and/or provide other suitable evidence of vaccination to provide to the employer.</li> <li>• If an exemption has been sought, provide employer with written confirmation where a suitably qualified health practitioner certifies that it is inappropriate for them to be vaccinated</li> <li>• Note that worker information will be held and managed in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020 and Health Information Privacy Code 2020.</li> <li>• Note that worker information can only be accessed by the employer and authorised enforcement officers</li> <li>• If exempted, must commit to adopting all necessary risk mitigations agreed with the PCBU/employer to ensure their safety and the safety of those they work with.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive and maintain accurate worker information from PCBUs/Employers for inclusion in the centralised register</li> <li>• Provide compliance reporting to PCBUs/Employers and WorkSafe.</li> </ul>
In relation to getting a vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify, educate and support workers and affected persons of their responsibility to get vaccinated.</li> <li>• Not prevent any worker from being vaccinated if their appointment to be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to employer, peers, union, vaccination provider (e.g.: general practice, community pharmacy, urgent care, Hauora Maori, Pacific provider) to find out more about getting vaccinated, the vaccination process or the vaccine itself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHBs may make special arrangements with PCBUs for vaccinating their workers where required</li> <li>• DHBs will prioritise health and</li> </ul>

	PCBUs/Employers	Affected persons	MoH/DHBs
	<p>vaccinated falls within their working hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We encourage employers to pay employees should they need to be vaccinated during working hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak to employer about any special vaccination arrangements that have been made with the DHB in their region</li> <li>Book their vaccine by going onto the <a href="#">Book My Vaccine</a> website, by calling the COVID Vaccination Healthline on 0800 28 29 26 8am-8pm, 7 days a week, or attend a drive-through or walk-in vaccination clinic without a booking.</li> </ul>	<p>disability workers for a vaccination</p>

### 3.3 OLHOC Island Bay

The activities undertaken at OLHOC Island Bay are predominantly hospitality and are therefore covered by the Government decision to mandate vaccination as made on 26 October 2021. The alternative to mandating vaccination is for us to close the facility as we have no 'click and collect' product to speak of. Closing the facility is not regarded as appropriate nor desirable for the continued delivery of our mission.

In accordance with processes that will be made clear around the vaccination certificate and its presentation at hospitality venues, this policy establishes that ***all services offered to the public through OLHOC Island Bay for staff, volunteers and members of the public coming onto and using the premises will require signing in and presentation of a valid vaccination certificate.***

### 3.4 Compassion Soup Kitchen

As of the date of adoption of this policy the Compassion Soup Kitchen is regarded as hospitality rather than an essential service for the purposes of the Traffic Light system. This, notwithstanding our status of essential service under the 'levels' regime, is a welcome clarification as provided to the CE by the office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet on Friday 12 November 2021. Under such a clarification we regard our 'click and collect' position as the current takeaway service as provided through levels 4, 3 and 2. For the purposes of ensuring health and safety of our staff and volunteers and protection of the whānau under the Traffic Light system a hybrid system of mandate is possible.

Under the traffic light system it will be possible to return to an inside dinner service at least under Green. Given the confines of the premises and the uncertain number of people that might need a hot meal on any given day, we will continue to operate a takeaway service for all those unvaccinated. ***If for whatever reason a member of the whānau is unable or unwilling to sign-in, or present a valid vaccination certificate, then they will be offered a takeaway meal. Others can partake in our seated, inside, dining service.*** It is incredibly important to us that no one be turned away in their need for a hot meal. We regard this approach as a reasonable, fair and safe approach to ensuring protection whilst serving needs of those who require it.

### 3.5 Hiruhārama – Church & Convent accommodation

***The convent accommodation offered at Hiruhārama is rightly classified as hospitality. As such it is subject to either mandated vaccination use or closure. In seeking feedback from the Hiruhārama community it is our decision to closure access to both the church and convent until such time as we are able to offer access without a necessity to ensure vaccination or other covid restrictions. Unfortunately, this might be of an extended period. Regular reviews of this situation will be undertaken, but our lead will be taken from the community and the advice they provide us on what is best for the whānau.***

### 3.6 Compassion Housing

For all activity of Compassion Housing not involving facilitated nursing services, Compassion Housing is not covered by a mandated vaccination as established by the Government. It therefore falls to the Sisters of Compassion Group to undertake a risk assessment in determining the level of protection needed within our

policy on Covid-19 vaccination. Without outlining the process to be followed, Worksafe provides guidance on the completion of a workplace risk assessment for the purpose of determining the risk of infection from Covid-19. Rather than replicate here, the link to their informative page is:

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/how-to-decide-what-work-requires-a-vaccinated-employee/>

Suffice to say, no vaccine mandate is provided here for Compassion Housing, but will require the completion of a risk and mitigation assessment in order to determine whether a mandate is required. This will apply to our two staff and Sisters living in our housing communities and who are focused on providing pastoral support for others. No matter the risk assessment it is the position of the Sisters of Compassion Group that it is neither possible nor desirable to mandate vaccination of any tenant in one of our properties. Each tenant enjoys the exclusive enjoyment of their rented property and it is not possible for us to mandate their vaccination merely due to our relationship with them of landlord.

## Exception & Exemptions

### 4.1 Exceptions and Exemptions

All of the above restrictions on access and use of our facilities are subject to those holding a valid exception or exemption issued by the New Zealand Government. All those holding such exceptions and exemptions will be able to enjoy our services and facilities as though they meet the requirements set out in this document in full.

## Chapel & Services

### 5.1 Hiruhārama

Until such time as the need for mandated vaccinations is not required, the church at Hiruhārama is to be closed.

### 5.2 OLHOC Island Bay

The Chapel at Island Bay is a significant component of retreat, rest, pilgrimage and pray for many people and groups. The difficulties associated with the provision of services for the unvaccinated, particularly as the Chapel is part of a wider hospitality site, mean that it is not practicable for services to be provided in the Chapel for unvaccinated people. Until such time as the need for mandated vaccinations is not required, the Chapel at OLHOC Island Bay is subject to a mandate of full vaccination.