

Major Australian Supermarket Chains Adopt “No Jab, No Job” Policy Impacting Hundreds of Thousands of Workers

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Three major Australian supermarket chains are adopting a [COVID-19 vaccine mandate](#) that will see 300,000 workers across the country get vaccinated or lose their job.

According to the Australian financial journal [The Financial Review](#), the movement is being led by Woolworths, with rivals Aldi and Coles joining the fray.

The Woolworths mandate will be imposed on all staff members across its 1,200 retail outlets and Big W discount department stores; workers at its warehouses, distribution centers and offices will also be required to get the jab. Most Woolworths stores serve around 20,000 in-store customers every week.

The deadline for full vaccination in some areas of the country is January 31, while others will have until March 31 to get both shots. The company has said it will consider practical and individual issues staff members might have in complying with the mandate, with a final policy expected to be announced in November that will include provisions for legitimate religious and medical exemptions.

Coles, meanwhile, will require vaccination in most Australian states; their workforce totals 120,000 people across 837 supermarkets. Those in the affected areas must have received at least one dose by November 5 and a second one by December 17.

Meanwhile, German-owned discount grocery chain Aldi will be introducing similar rules that are expected to be announced following a consultation period that may last several weeks. The chief executive of the company, which has 12,000 staff working across its 570 stores there, said: “Our view is that requiring all employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in the future is the best measure to ensure the health and safety of our teams and our customers.”

Other grocery chains, however, are taking a different approach. For example, Wesfarmers, owner of Target, Kmart and the Bunnings hardware chain in Australia, have said that only new employees will have to be vaccinated. Existing employees will not be subjected to a mandate given the high take-up rate among them that managing director Rob Scott attributes to informational sessions and vaccine leave arrangements.

Australia's extreme measures don't seem to be reducing cases

Australia has resorted to extreme measures to curb the virus, including an extended lockdown affecting most of the country and closing its borders, yet cases have continued to rise there and the government eventually chose to loosen some of its restrictive measures due to the toll they were taking on the economy. Melbourne, the country's second-biggest city, has had lockdown measures in some form in place for 245 days, making it the home of the world's longest enduring lockdown.

Meanwhile, Western Australia recently announced COVID-19 vaccine mandates for most workers, including not only supermarket staff but also teachers and other groups. The mandate will be rolled out across three groups that together make up 75 percent of the Western Australia workforce.

The first group includes meat processing workers, fire and emergency services workers, community workers, healthcare and elderly care staff, police officers, port and freight workers and mining workers, who must be fully jabbed by December 31.

Supermarket staff falls under the second category, whose deadline will be January 31. This group also includes restaurant and pub workers, childcare workers, construction workers and those working in public transport. Teachers and other school staff must be fully vaccinated by the time the school term begins. A third group includes government employees, parliament members and other retail workers, who must be fully vaccinated to go to work in the event of a lockdown, [The Guardian reports](#).

Some Australians are already calling for boycotts of Woolworths, with thousands of people on Twitter registering their opposition to the company [forcing its workers to take an experimental vaccine](#) to maintain their employment, many of whom have been posting their weekly or yearly grocery expenditures to show the company how much money they will be losing.

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