



Transport Workers' Union of NSW

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24 August 2021

The Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Premier,

The Transport Workers' Union has significant concerns about several measures announced by your Government last week. If these issues are not urgently fixed before these measures come into effect, they have the potential to cripple our state's transport and freight networks and disrupt the deliveries of essential goods across NSW.

Firstly, your announcement that transport workers in the 12 local government areas of concern will be forbidden from working after 30 August unless they have had their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is of great concern. While the TWU recognises that vaccinations are an important tool in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, imposing a blunt deadline for workers to get vaccinated with less than 10 days' notice is completely unacceptable – particularly when many transport workers only became eligible to access the vaccine last week.

A survey of more than 1,200 transport workers conducted by the TWU last month found that 54% of transport workers are not yet vaccinated. 84% of those surveyed identified not being able to get paid time off from work as a key barrier to vaccination, as well as 29% who identified difficulty in securing an appointment time. While many of those unvaccinated transport workers may have received the vaccine in the time since the survey was completed, it is clear that there are still thousands of transport workers who have not yet been vaccinated, and who your Government is now threatening to ban from going to work.

Transport workers don't have the luxury of 'working from home' – every minute spent off the road is money they're losing. If you are going to force transport workers in the LGAs of concern to be vaccinated, then at the very least you must also ensure there are enough appointments available in these areas and introduce a payment for those who want to get the vaccine, to compensate them for time spent getting the jab and/or dealing with side effects.

While I note there is a provision for transport workers to not require vaccination if their workplace implements rapid antigen testing, the feedback we have received from workers and employers is that this is unlikely to be rolled out to any significant scale before the new rules come into effect on 30th August.

Secondly, the TWU is extremely concerned about your announcement that any transport worker who lives or works in an LGA of concern will not be allowed to go to work unless they have a permit from this Saturday. Given your Government's botched implementation of a similar permit system for regional NSW, the TWU is of the view this permit system will be completely unworkable for the transport industry unless it is significantly changed.

AUSTRALIA'S STRONGEST UNION, GIVING TRANSPORT WORKERS A POWERFUL VOICE SINCE 1888

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According to the 2016 census, more than 68,000 people working in the transport, postal and warehousing industry live in the 12 LGAs of concern – around 43% of the statewide total. When you factor in those workers who do not live in LGAs of concern but need to enter them for work, it is clear that the majority of transport workers based in Greater Sydney will require a permit under this policy in its current form.

By nature, transport workers don't have a fixed place of work. The application form requires applicants to list every specific location they will be travelling to over a 14-day period – an ask that is practically impossible for most transport workers. Transport workers make frequent, irregular stops for fuel and rest breaks, and rostering arrangements rarely offer transport workers 14 days' worth of certainty about where they will be travelling to.

Rather than requiring transport workers to complete an onerous application every 14 days which requires information they often won't be able to provide, the TWU believes that transport workers should instead be able to apply for (and receive) an ongoing permit. This will reduce the burden on transport workers who simply seek to go about their work of providing essential deliveries to keep our state moving, and will also reduce the strain on the system for permit applications by significant reducing the number of applications needed. This change should also be applied to the existing regional NSW travel permit system.

I hope you will consider these common-sense improvements to the measures you recently announced and to make them workable for the transport industry.

Without transport workers, NSW will grind to a halt.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Olsen
TWU NSW/QLD State Secretary

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