Employment ads seeking fully vaccinated workers skyrocket

The job market is rapidly shrinking for unvaccinated Australians with more businesses only accepting applications from jobseekers who are double dosed against Covid.

Vanessa Croll

@VanessaCroll
3 min read
November 4, 2021 - 10:32AM
News Corp Australia Network

The job market is rapidly shrinking for unvaccinated Australians with more businesses only accepting applications from jobseekers who are double dosed against Covid.

The number of job ads listed on Adzuna containing the keywords "fully vaccinated" grew from 113 at the start of September to more than 1800 jobs near the end of October.

According to Adzuna, the highest number of these vacancies are in healthcare and nursing, with a noticeable increase in admin, sales, trade and construction, travel, retail, social work, customer service and other general roles.

"'Fully vaccinated' as keywords within job ads is not meant to be discriminatory; companies have a due diligence to protect their workforce," says Adzuna country manager Tejas Deshpande.

"The challenge is to get a balance of keeping employees safe and providing the employee an option should they choose not to be vaccinated."

The number of job ads listed on Adzuna containing the keywords "fully vaccinated" grew from 113 to more than 1800 jobs in just one month.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

The vaccination debate has impacted almost every business across Australia, according to Employsure business partner and employment relations expert Emma Dawson, who currently spends more than half of her working week assisting employees to navigate staff vaccination requirements.

"All businesses have a duty under health and safety legislation to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their workers and others in the workplace," she says.

"And Covid is a risk that all people in Australia are confronted with, so it is very important that businesses are aware of what their obligations are when managing this."

Employsure business partner and employment relations expert Emma Dawson. Picture: Supplied

Until clearer vaccination requirements for staff in specific working environments are written into law, Ms Dawson says employers should determine the level of risk within their workplace.

"Businesses need to be conducting a risk assessment in consultation with their workers to assess the risk and the likelihood of infection in the workplace in light of operations, public health advice and regulatory guidance," she says.

WHEN VACCINATION CAN BE A REQUIREMENT

There are only three criteria under which a business can require an employee to be vaccinated, says Ms Dawson.

"The first one is if there is a commonwealth, state or territory law in place. The second would be if there's a term in an applicable employment contract, enterprise agreement or other registered agreement that requires the employee to get vaccinated against a particular disease. And the third would be if no legal requirement exists but the direction to vaccinate is considered lawful and reasonable."

MAKING THE CALL

For Jackie's Sports Massage Therapy founder and owner Jackie Messaike, the decision to only reopen after lockdown with a fully vaccinated workforce was not taken lightly.

Jackie's Sports Massage founder and owner Jackie Messaike has ensured all her practising staff are fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Picture: Supplied

Ms Messaike started her remedial massage business in Sydney's CBD when she was 19 years old and has spent 27 years building it into the reputable clinic it is today.

"I employ 20 to 30 therapists, some of whom have been working with me now for over 10 years," she says.

"We closed the clinic doors for six weeks last year and then a few weeks this year when the numbers in Sydney were high. The only way I felt comfortable reopening was to ask my therapists to be vaccinated before returning to work.

Jackie's Sports Massage practising staff are fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Picture: Supplied

"We are a hands-on business and we are face-to-face with clients. I called each therapist to let them know I 100 per cent support any decision they make regarding vaccinations, as I do respect those people who choose not to get it. ... however, as a business owner, I feel 100 per cent responsible for the wellbeing of my therapists and if they were to contract Covid while working for me and become very ill, I could not live with myself.

"Luckily for me, every single therapist agreed and already had their vaccinations booked. I did not lose any staff or have any therapists feel like they were being forced into doing something they did not want to do already."

Corporate Dojo founder and expert in HR and leadership Karen Gately says, whether required by law or circumstance, there are things employers should consider when having the vaccination conversation with staff.

DO:
■ **Be informed** – "As a general rule, do your research before you go into the conversations to make sure that you're well informed. Understand what's

being mandated and what the guidelines are.”

■ **Be respectful and compassionate** – “Understand that people do have their own personal views and they can be strongly held views. Have empathy, be respectful but also be really clear about what your policies are.”

■ **Consult with staff** – Policies are easier to map out for future staff, what is trickier is for the existing workforce. Explore with people what their views are through a consultation process.

DON’T:

■ **Push forward without notice** – The more notice you can give people, the more they can get their heads around it and go on a bit of an emotional journey and come to terms with reality.

■ **Be closed to any viewpoints** – Most humans want to feel like they’re being heard and they’re being given fair consideration.

■ **Be rigid and closed-minded to alternative solutions** – There might be members of the team you can accommodate continuing to work remotely. Be willing to think flexibly about what might be a possibility.

* Corporate Dojo founder Karen Gately