

## **COVID-19 Response Inquiry**

I work in the Information Security sector and lost my job in April 2022 despite having worked remotely for that employer, a superannuation firm, since March 2020. I originally started at that firm in August 2018 and had an excellent work record throughout that time.

From March 2020 onwards the firm insisted that staff WFH (Work From Home) so I went to considerable effort to ensure I was just as effective from that location. I even researched and shared best practices on managing geographically dispersed teams. Over a period of almost two years the firm continued to praise staff for their WFH efforts and stated that people were just as effective there as when they were in the office.

I was one of the few who was happy to return to the office in late 2020 as part of a Pilot run (we were in-between lockdowns at the time and no government mandates existed which would have prevented staff from attending a workplace). With the return of lockdowns and subsequent mandates I was no longer able to attend the office and resumed WFH 100% of the time.

In late 2021 / early 2022 the superannuation firm started saying that remote work was no longer effective and that all staff must prepare to return to the office on a partial basis. This directly contradicted what management had been saying since March 2020 with regards to how effective remote working had been. And so they required that all staff consent to two injections each. No alternative options or arrangements were permitted, not even a negative RAT test was considered acceptable. Ironically enough as soon as staff started returning to the office in late 2021 / early 2022 there were almost weekly emails about multiple confirmed COVID-19 cases in the office. So vaccinated people with COVID-19 were allowed into the office while unvaccinated people with a negative RAT test were not permitted to come into the office.

During that time my direct manager was VERY supportive of my situation. Unfortunately, the directive seemed to be coming from a much higher level (outside of the Information Security team) so it felt like no meaningful discussion or consultation was going to take place. The CEO specifically stated that he was "on the right side of history" in terms of forcing the mandate at the firm.

At no time did my employer perform a COVID-19 Vaccination Risk Assessment for my team. I asked about this many times but they repeatedly stated that no such risk assessment existed.

From November 2021 through to April 2022 I was placed under extreme pressure to accept two Provisionally Approved Vaccine injections. During this time I felt that I was being victimised, harassed and excluded. Because I did not consent at that time to be injected my employment was terminated in April 2022.

Both during and after this ordeal I was extremely stressed and felt anxious all the time, which had a severe effect on my mental health and overall wellbeing. Before being terminated there was constant coercion from some of my co-workers to "just get it". When my employment was terminated, I was left feeling humiliated, worthless and utterly disposable. I have never in my life experienced such coercion in a workplace, especially when there was in existence a government acknowledged mitigating control of producing a negative RAT test. My employer constantly refused to accept this as one of the possible options despite the fact that my role does not involve dealing with customers face-to-face. They were intransigent in the extreme (you must return to the office, a negative RAT test is not an option, you must be vaccinated). I truly felt as if I were being driven mad by a company mandated Kafkaesque policy.

My self-confidence and sense of self-worth has taken a hit that I don't think I'll ever fully recover from thanks to that employer's actions. What makes it worse is that the firm has now, as of October 2022, lifted their mandates and no longer require staff, contractors or even casual visitors to be vaccinated. They simply ask that anyone feeling unwell should stay home (which is what any reasonable person would do). So all that fuss and damage done, only to reverse their policy six months after terminating my employment.