

On 21 February 2021, Greg Hunt, the Federal Health Minister, speaking on the ABC's Insiders, announced of the Covid-19 vaccination program: "The world is engaged in the largest clinical trial, the largest global vaccination trial ever, and we will have enormous amounts of data." He was further asked by interviewer, [REDACTED] about requiring certain employees in certain workplaces to take the vaccine eg. aged care, Hunt replied that, based on the advice of medical professionals, (namely the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee) the vaccination would not be made mandatory and "having confidence in what is a free, universally available, but voluntary vaccine is the critical thing". (Interview transcript attached).

Yet, when the vaccination program was rolled out, "voluntary vaccine" was not the critical thing. Government services such as police, ambulance, firefighters and health care across Australia mandated their employees to take the jab. Large corporations like Westpac and CBA, QANTAS, and the big supermarkets Woolworths, Coles and ALDI also mandated their workers. People were sacked because they wished to retain their bodily autonomy, because they had objections to taking the jab on moral or religious grounds, or on scientific grounds as the jabs were in a trial phase without genotoxicity or carcinogenicity studies provided by the manufacturers.

Why wasn't federal anti-discrimination legislation passed to protect workers from these mandates?

I contend that employers were given free rein to discriminate against their employees and hence, sack them, as no brakes were applied to these organisations by way of anti-discrimination legislation.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Status (Prevention of Discrimination) Bill 2022 was introduced into Parliament on 29 November 2022. A further Fair Work Amendment

(Prohibiting COVID-19 Vaccine Discrimination) Bill 2023 was tabled on 8 February 2023. The Bills were not enacted and some workers are still mandated out of their jobs.

Sacked workers who made informed choices to protect themselves and their families were discriminated against and are now due compensation. Such a bill should be brought before Federal Parliament.