

Australian region makes vaccine mandatory for service workers

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Shopworkers, tourist guides and barbers are among dozens of groups who must get COVID-19 shots to work in Australia's Northern Territory, officials announced Wednesday, unveiling one of the world's most far-reaching vaccine mandates.

Expressing concern at low coronavirus jab rates in some communities, the Territory's chief minister Michael Gunner announced "anyone serving the public at work will have to be vaccinated".

The vast Northern Territory stretches from tropical Darwin on the Timor Sea to the dusty Outback settlements of Alice Springs and Uluru—an area three times the size of Spain.

It is home to a large number of Aboriginal and other vulnerable remote communities.

Although more than 80 percent of the region's [adult population](#) has received at least one dose, Gunner said there were "patches of concern" and communities where people are hesitant or refusing the vaccine.

"I am making sure we do everything possible to get everyone vaccinated," Gunner said.

"You can't hold people down and stick a needle in their arm. It is their choice and some are choosing against it."

By Christmas Eve, anyone working with the public must be fully vaccinated or face a Aus\$5,000 (US\$3,700) fine and instant dismissal.

"You work in hospitality—you need to get the jab. Retail or a supermarket—you need to get the jab. If you are behind the counter at a bank or receptionist, you need to get the jab," said Gunner.

"A Barber, hairdresser beauty therapist you need to get the jab... (if) you are a frontline worker in the economy, that means you must be vaccinated."

In other parts of Australia, COVID-19 vaccines have been made

mandatory for [healthcare workers](#) and teachers.

Indonesia's capital has announced fines for refusing a [vaccine](#) and Fiji has a policy of "no jab, no job" for all [government workers](#).

And around the world, the unvaccinated are now routinely barred from indoor or crowded venues.

But the Northern Territory's rules go further than most democracies.

The Territory has seen just 214 cases of coronavirus since the pandemic began and zero deaths, but officials admit that run will not last.

"One day, perhaps one day soon, it will be here and it will stay here. We're going to have to live with it," Gunner said.

"If you don't get vaccinated, there's a much, much higher chance that you will die."

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