

Call to legalise work access restrictions for unvaccinated

 By [Katja Hamilton](#)

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There is a need to urgently institute vaccine mandates, access restrictions and non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to drive up vaccinations, save lives, and prevent the need for economically destructive lockdowns as we face the prospect of a 4th wave.



Source: [Pexels](#)

This was the message from Business for South Africa (B4SA) at a media briefing this afternoon. They say business has issued a call for vaccine mandates in the workplace and for the imposition of public access restrictions for the unvaccinated. This in line with the President's recent announcement that it has established a task team to investigate vaccine mandates and appropriate access restrictions, while Cosatu also issued a statement today supporting vaccinated-related restrictions.

"We can't afford to move away from a Level 1 lockdown, and we need to move to support small to medium businesses," said Timothy Schultz of B4SA.

He said a vaccine mandate would provide clarity on how businesses can navigate the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) regulations to best protect individuals [entering their work premises] from contracting Covid-19.

Declarator an option

He said B4SA has briefed advocates and Senior Council, and that affidavits are being put in place which could potentially see a declarator announced as early as January.

He said many businesses that have been taken to court in lieu of refusing on-site entry to non-vaccinated employees (or terminating their work contracts due to non-vaccination), would seek guidance from the declarator.

Martin Kingston of B4SA adds: "OHS guidelines are there to enable an employer to look after the individuals working for them. A declaratory order is needed so we know where we stand. At present a landlord has the right to restrict access to his premises if the person entering the premises is putting others at risk [of contracting Covid-19]."

Access restrictions worldwide

He said countries like New York have already implemented access restrictions to public spaces like pubs and bars, and that this has driven more people to get vaccinated. South Africa, he said, could similarly achieve its vaccination targets if vaccine mandates are implemented. "South Africa has the vaccine supplies and the facilities – both mobile and fixed – to potentially triple its vaccination numbers to 120 000 a day," he said.

"Science tells us this is the best [way forward in order] to vaccinate people as quickly as possible. It makes sense for our economy. It makes sense from a human point of view," said Cas Coovadia of B4SA.

He said the call for mandatory vaccinations for business is a step in the right direction and that Business for South Africa is set to engage with government and give its input.

QR codes on the cards

He said access restrictions would mean vaccinated individuals would use an activated QR code downloaded on their smartphones to gain access to public spaces such as businesses, churches and non-essential shops.

B4SA did not provide details on how the declarator would work in the public-transport sector and how it would be implemented in State-owned organisations where workers refuse to be vaccinated.

"When it comes to public transport there are practical and societal issues that might prevent the ability to restrict access," Coovadia said.

It was not clear how this would impact healthcare workers and caregivers in old-age homes who refuse to be vaccinated.

NPI's equally important

"We need to increase our focus on non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) and to restrict the congregation of people, even before we approach the issue of booster jabs.

"Only 25% of the population is vaccinated. This adds fuel to the fire [in the face of the coming] 4th wave. Our vaccination levels are lower than they need to be."

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

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