Immunisation Expert Advisory Panel  
Terms of Reference and Process

Purpose
The SA Health Immunisation Expert Advisory Panel (IEAP) will support the implementation of the Immunisation for Health Care Workers in South Australia 2017 Policy Directive.

Scope
The Immunisation Expert Advisory Panel provides recommendations for the management of special circumstances where a Health Care Worker (HCW) in an SA Health service is unable (due to temporary or permanent contraindications to vaccination, or non-response to vaccination), or refuses, to comply with the Policy Directive, and an acceptable outcome consistent with the Policy Directive has not been reached through local management procedures.

Responsibilities
Provide expert technical advice to SA Health Local Health Networks (LHNs), South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS), other SA Health services and Education Providers to inform the development of an evidence-based risk management plan for an individual HCW who is non-compliant with the Policy Directive, with consideration of the responsibilities, location, duration, staffing profile and client/patient profile of the HCW position.

Reporting relationships
The IEAP will report through the Director, Communicable Disease Control Branch (CDCB) to the Chief Public Health Officer. Copies of Panel Reports for specific cases will be disseminated to the senior management of the involved LHN, SAAS, other SA Health service or Education Provider.

Chair
The Chair is the Director, Communicable Disease Control Branch, or delegate (a Public Health Physician from CDCB). The Chair (or delegate) is responsible for:

- Coordinating invitations to Panel members, including the Health Care Worker and her/his nominated support person;
- Communicating with the involved LHN, SAAS, other SA Health service or Education Provider;
- Requesting and collating relevant documentation prior to the Panel review;
- Making logistic arrangements for the Panel hearing; and
- Disseminating the outcome and recommendations of the Panel review to the relevant parties.
Membership
Membership of the Panel will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to individual HCW circumstances.

Members of the IEAP will be required to disclose at the beginning of each meeting any conflict of interest, actual or potential, relating to issues under discussion at that meeting. The Chair may require the member to absent themselves from the meeting and be removed from the process, if the conflict of interest would compromise impartiality and provide undue influence as part of the decision making process.

The Panel will comprise of:

- One representative (who will Chair the meeting) from the SA Health Communicable Disease Control Branch;
- One expert in immunology or infectious diseases (e.g., Immunologist or Infectious Disease Physician);
- One representative from the HCW’s work unit (Local Health Network, SAAS or other SA Health Service) OR, if a student HCW, the HCW’s Education Provider;
- One representative from SA Health People and Culture Directorate OR, if a student HCW, one representative from Better Placed, Office for Professional Development;
- One representative from the Legal and Governance Unit (if required); and
- One administrative staff member (responsible for minute taking).

Operating procedures

Convening the Immunisation Expert Advisory Panel
The IEAP will only be convened as the need arises to review specific HCW cases.

The Immunisation for Health Care Workers in South Australia 2016 Policy Directive indicates that an IEAP may be convened in situations where a HCW does not have immunity to one or more Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs) required for their work role and where, after management options (including appropriate work placements, work adjustments and/or work restrictions) have been considered at a local level, no acceptable outcome consistent with the Policy Directive is reached.

HCW categories for which an IEAP would be considered include, however are not limited to:

1. Existing employees within SA Health services who refuse recommended screening and/or vaccinations.

2. Student HCWs, prospective or existing employees who are unable to be vaccinated due to temporary or permanent medical contraindications and who have undergone a further specialist medical assessment.
The request to convene an IEAP should be made in writing to the Director, Communicable Disease Control Branch, SA Health by one of the following:

- Worker Health Clinical Practice Consultants (CPC)/ Clinical Services Consultants (or Infection Control Nurse Management Facilitator in CHSA);
- Management staff from a LHN, SAAS or other SA Health Service;
- Clinical Placement Coordinators from an Education Provider; or
- Health Care Worker (HCW) – prospective or existing employees and student HCW.

**Process**

1. The Director, CDCB will liaise with the Chief Public Health Officer regarding approval of the request to convene the IEAP.

2. The Panel will meet as soon as necessary and reasonably practicable once membership has been determined and necessary information obtained.

3. The HCW must be given at least two weeks (10 working days) notice of the date, time and place for the Panel meeting.

4. The HCW must provide requested documentation to the Chair at least one week (five working days) prior to the Panel meeting. Documentation may include, however is not limited to:
   - vaccination records;
   - results of blood tests to assess immunity;
   - other relevant laboratory results;
   - doctor’s letters relevant to the situation; and/or
   - if the HCW is refusing recommended screening or vaccination, documentation using the recommended Refusal Form.

5. The HCW must attend the review in person.

6. The HCW may also nominate one support person to attend. In all cases the HCW should provide the name of the nominated support person, and their relationship to the HCW, to the Panel Chair at least one week prior to the Panel hearing.

7. Expert Panel members will be provided, in confidence, with relevant documentation at least three working days prior to the Panel review.

Panel hearings will be conducted according to the following format:

1. Declaration of any conflict of interest, actual or potential.
2. Pre-meeting Panel discussion and review of documents.
3. Panel hearing with HCW and support person.
In undertaking its assessment the Panel will:

- Assess the HCW’s knowledge of the risks posed by their lack of immunity, to themselves and others, and understanding of the measures that could be taken to minimise the risks of both contracting and transmitting a vaccine-preventable disease in a healthcare setting.

- Ask the HCW to explain why they have chosen not to be screened or vaccinated, including any temporary or permanent medical contraindications to vaccination (not applicable to vaccine non-responders).

- Consider the details specific to each HCW position, e.g. location, duration, staffing profile, client/patient profile.

- Use a standardised risk assessment template to examine the likelihood and severity of a hazardous event, resulting in a risk characterisation of low, moderate, high or extreme.

- Develop a risk management plan for individual HCW with consideration of the responsibilities, location, duration, staffing profile and client/patient profile of the position.

The Report on the meeting, with recommendations, will be prepared by the Chair of the IEAP (or delegate), circulated among the Panel for consensus and then submitted through the Director, CDCB to the Chief Public Health Officer for a final decision on the recommendations. If consensus is not reached by the Panel members, the recommendations of the majority of Panel members will be noted, along with any dissenting views and the reasons, for the delegate’s consideration.

Outcome and appeals process

1. Once a decision has been made by the Chief Public Health Officer, the outcome will communicated to the SA Health manager or Clinical Placement Coordinator, who in turn will communicate it to the HCW.

2. The HCW has 14 days to respond if she/he intends to appeal.

3. Decisions made are reviewable in accordance with the provisions of the Work Health and Safety Act 2012:
   > Part 12 – Review of Decisions:
     o Division 1 – Reviewable Decisions;
     o Division 2 – Internal Review; and
     o Division 3 – External Review.