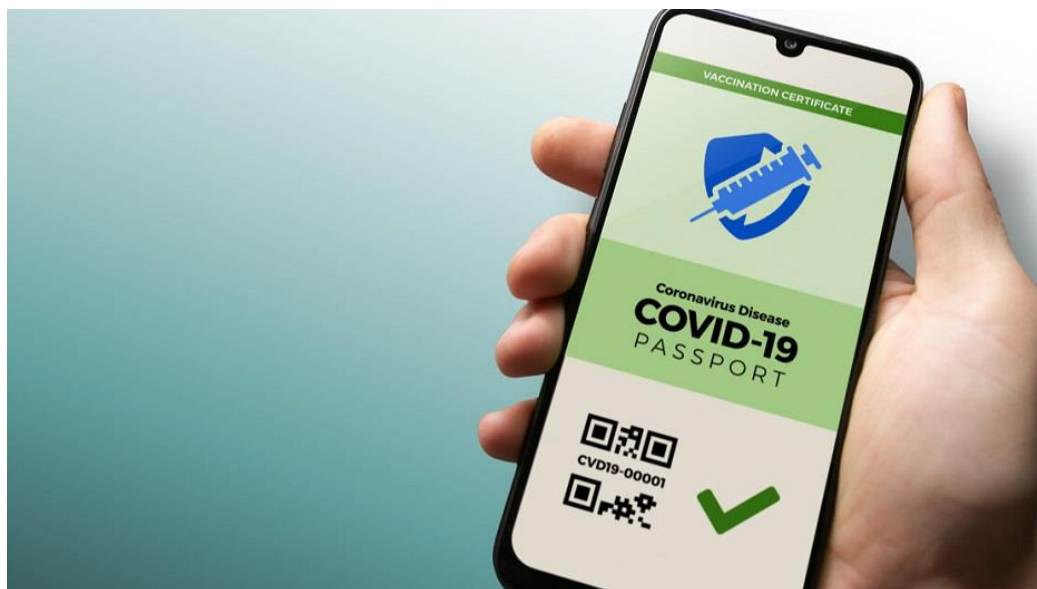


THE VOICE of Pensioners and Superannuants online

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NSW COVID-19 passport must include everybody



NEW South Wales is set to reach the 70 per cent double-vaccination milestone under the COVID-19 Reopening NSW roadmap in October.

The message from the NSW Government is that only the double-vaccinated will be able to enjoy freedoms such as travelling outside their Local Government Area and going for a sit-down cuppa with friends at a café.

Those not, or incompletely vaccinated will miss out until they get their two jabs.

To stop the unvaccinated from pretending that they are vaccinated and enjoying the same freedoms illegally, the Government will introduce what is essentially a COVID-19 vaccination passport.

THE VOICE predicted as much [back in March of this year](#).

Every COVID-19 vaccination is recorded by Medicare. It is already possible to obtain and print a document certifying such vaccinations. The question is will these print-outs be accepted as proof of vaccination when people want to go for a meal or a coffee?

The NSW Government has already signalled that Medicare COVID-19 records will be linked to the NSW COVID-19 tracking app currently used to check in and out of premises.

It is logical and necessary to link the Service NSW COVID-19 tracking app and Medicare records in the roll-out of a vaccination passport to ensure that NSW reopens in a safe way.

However, the Service NSW app currently leaves people without a compatible mobile phone – or no mobile phone at all – out in the cold.

This particular manifestation of the digital divide has the potential to make the roll-out of the Reopening NSW roadmap far less effective and inclusive than it deserves to be.

CPSA members report that many shops and businesses do not have this capability, or, in the case of major shopping venues (including supermarkets such as Coles and Woolworth's), QR-code scanners are not readily available, causing lengthy waiting periods. CPSA also notes that scanners are not mandatory for shops and businesses.

To ensure that older people, who have the highest rate of full vaccination but the lowest rate of digital connection, can fully participate in the reopening of NSW, practical, functional solutions must be found.

An online vaccination status register with access restricted to shops and businesses would likely be very effective. It would work in combination with people producing photo-ID.

Another option would be to provide hard copy proof-of-vaccination certificates to be collected from a Service NSW shopfront or to be printed out privately following online access.

The use of the COVID check-in card should also continue, despite the issues with it that have been encountered thus far.

What's the underlying reason for mentioning underlying health conditions in COVID reporting?



It may be true that older age and certain existing health conditions may worsen the impacts of COVID-19 but the use of ‘underlying health conditions’ in COVID-19 reporting has lately been criticised. There have been several claims that the federal Government is using the largely encompassing label of underlying health conditions to avoid accountability for a slow vaccination roll out and additional perceived failures to contain the COVID-19 virus.

One in two Australians has a chronic health condition and 20 per cent of Australians are aged over sixty, meaning that those who die of COVID-19 but have ‘underlying health conditions’ are not a small ‘other’ but make up a large proportion of the population.

In a media release dated 8 September, People with Disability Australia (PWDA) labelled the use of underlying health conditions in COVID-19 reporting as “victim-blaming”. PWDA also reinforced the fact that a disability or chronic health condition is not a death sentence.

The Grattan Institute’s Professor Stephen Duckett said on Twitter that around 10 million Australians are at higher risk of complications from COVID-19. Duckett told the SBS the disclosure of a person’s underlying health condition status “...is more or less dismissing the importance of that death and excusing the death because they had an underlying condition”. Duckett went on to say it is important to remember that regardless of the health status or age of a person who has died from COVID-19, they expected to live longer than they did.

Further adding to the argument that the use of underlying health conditions in COVID-19 reporting is a tactic used by government to avoid accountability is the low vaccination rate of NDIS participants. As of 13 September, only 58.1 per cent of eligible people on the NDIS had received one dose, only 39.3 per cent had received two doses.

Instead of using underlying health conditions to excuse COVID-19 deaths, Australian governments should do more to prioritise the vaccination of people with disability and health conditions. Even though this cohort of people were amongst the first to be eligible for vaccines, the above vaccination rates show not enough effort has been directed to ensuring the most vulnerable Australians are vaccinated.

How higher inflation leads to bigger pension indexation increases



SEPTEMBER is indexation month for social security payments and keenly awaited by many dependent on these payments.

For the past few years, indexation has produced only very small increases in payments. This is the result of the rate of inflation, which has been flat for a long time.

However, it appears [inflation is back from the dead](#).

That's why the September indexation has produced higher than normal increases.

The Age Pension, Carer Payment and Disability Support Pension will increase by \$14.80 a fortnight for singles to \$967.50 and \$22.40 a fortnight for couples combined to \$1,458.60.

Pensions were indexed according to the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI), which came out at 1.6 per cent, while the Consumer Price Index (CPI) came out at 1.4 per cent.

JobSeeker will increase from \$629.60 to \$638.30 for singles without children. For singles over 60, the rate will go up from \$677 to \$686.30.

Jobseeker is always indexed according to CPI.

There is a cost-of-living index for payments like JobSeeker, but – very unfairly – it is not used to index these payments.

Click [here](#) for full indexation details.

It is important to remember that whatever the increase in the social security payment, the idea is to maintain the purchasing power of the payment.

Pension-type payments can also be indexed according to wage rises, if these have been higher than inflation as measured by CPI and PBLCI.

However, wage rises have been small to non-existent over the past few years, just like inflation.

However, with inflation seemingly on the rise there may be a glimmer of hope for long-suffering term deposit holders.

When inflation goes up for long enough, it forces the Reserve Bank to put the cash rate. This feeds into term deposit rates, which tend to rise in tandem with the cash rate.

It's only a glimmer of hope, though. The Reserve Bank regards the current rate of inflation as a 'spike'. That means the Bank doesn't think it will last. In fact, it has said that it cannot at this point see itself putting the cash rate up for another three years.

Here's hoping the Reserve Bank has got it wrong!

It's happened before.