

Dear Honourable Members of Parliament,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senator Hanson's introduction of the COVID-19 Vaccination Status (Prevention of Discrimination) Bill 2022 and the Fair Work Amendment (Prohibiting COVID-19 Vaccine Discrimination) Bill 2023.

As we all know, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our society, economy, and healthcare system. New information is arising daily regarding the devastating health implications that the vaccines are having on a portion of our population. While the World Health Organisation and governments both nationally and internationally continue to promote the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines, the efficacy data is appalling and thousands of people are reporting serious side effects. These people feel like they are “not being heard” or treated fairly by our government and I tend to agree with their sentiment.

The way the vaccines were rolled out was despicable and completely disregarded our individual right to health autonomy. Health autonomy refers to an individual's ability to make informed decisions about their own health and healthcare without external coercion or influence. It is the right of every person to be in control of their own health, including the right to choose their healthcare providers, treatments, and health behaviours.

Health autonomy is based on the principle of self-determination, which is rooted in the ethical principle of respect for persons. This principle recognizes that individuals have the capacity to make their own choices and that they should be allowed to exercise this capacity without undue influence from others.

Alternatively, coercive control refers to a pattern of behaviour used by a person to dominate, control, and manipulate another person in a relationship. This type of behaviour is often insidious and difficult to identify, as it can involve subtle tactics that are intended to undermine a person's autonomy and sense of self-worth. Examples of coercive control include isolating a person from friends and family, monitoring their every move, controlling their finances, making all the decisions in the relationship, and using intimidation and threats to control their behaviour. This behaviour is not limited to romantic relationships and was evident from both governments and the private sector throughout the vaccination roll-out.

During the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccinations, health autonomy was completely disregarded, and there is a considerable amount of evidence of coercive control. The Queensland Government monitored its citizens movements by implementing the Check In Qld application. Moreover, they implemented the requirement to show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination in order to enter hospitality venues within the state, isolating those who chose to maintain their health autonomy and refuse the vaccination. While the government was implementing this control over its citizens, the private sector was enforcing ultimatums on its workforce. Businesses effectively told employees that they must be vaccinated in order to maintain their employment.

Individuals should have never been forced to decide between losing their jobs or undertaking a medical procedure, and this behaviour can be equated to financial abuse. When reflecting on my personal experience I feel as though my health autonomy was completely stripped from me with no consideration of the future implications that may arise. My own employer did not mandate vaccinations. However, a majority my largest customers did. As I work in sales, this meant that if I was unvaccinated, I could not enter my customer's business premises. In my role I require complete access to my customers or my position within my company effectively becomes redundant. Therefore, I was forced to decide to have a

medical procedure that not only I did not want to have, but also one that has no long-term efficacy or safety data available.

In healthcare, health autonomy is often reflected in the concept of informed consent, where healthcare providers must ensure that patients are fully informed about their treatment options, potential risks and benefits, and the consequences of refusing treatment. Patients must then make a voluntary decision about whether to accept or refuse treatment based on this information. I was not given the opportunity to make a voluntary decision as I was bound by financial implications. I was not fully informed about the potential risks as there is not long-term data available. Informed consent was completely absent, and my livelihood balanced on whether I undertook this experimental medical procedure. Thanks to this experience, I am now ashamed to be an Australian and no longer believe that we live in a free country.

The rollout of the vaccine has created challenges, particularly around issues of discrimination and unequal treatment of individuals based on their vaccination status. How can we as a society condemn discrimination when discussing race or gender, but promote it when discussing vaccination status?

The bills that Senator Hanson introduced aim to address these issues by prohibiting discrimination based on an individual's COVID-19 vaccination status. This is a critical step in protecting the rights and freedoms of all individuals, regardless of their vaccination status. The bills will also help to ensure that our workplaces and public spaces remain safe and healthy for all.

Furthermore, the Fair Work Amendment (Prohibiting COVID-19 Vaccine Discrimination) Bill 2023 is particularly important, as it will help to ensure that employees are not unfairly discriminated against based on their vaccination status. It will also provide greater clarity for employers around their responsibilities and obligations when it comes to managing the risks associated with COVID-19 in the workplace.

In conclusion, I strongly urge all members of parliament to support Senator Hanson's bills. They represent an important step forward in protecting the health and wellbeing of all Australians and ensuring that we can emerge from this crisis as a stronger and more united nation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Ryan