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Resources sector can play role in vaccination

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OPINION PAUL EVERINGHAM

We're now getting on for 18 months into living with COVID-19 and, as the current situation in New South Wales shows, the pandemic isn't something that will just be going away.

I know many members of the mining and resources sector's workforce will have family and friends living in Sydney and other areas of NSW and our thoughts and hopes are with all of them.

I know there has also been significant interest in how and when COVID-19 vaccinations may be rolled out for our workers, including from the thousands who reside in the

South West and commute regularly to operational sites in other regional areas of the State.

Like the national vaccine rollout itself, this is a somewhat fluid space that is continually evolving.

One thing I can say with certainty is that the health and safety of our people and the communities in which we operate is absolutely our first priority, as it has been the entire way through this pandemic.

CME has contributed strongly to the Minerals Council of Australia's work at a Federal level around the vaccination of our sector's workers.

Initially, our sector's national approach focused on ensuring those workers considered vulnerable or who were in

contact with vulnerable communities should have access to vaccinations as soon as was practical.

But in recent weeks it's become apparent there may be the potential for companies and employers across a range of industries to play a more active role in the vaccine rollout.

Of course, different mining

and resources operators will have different capabilities and policies, which means a one-sized-fits-all model may not be practical.

Our sector has been in continual conversation with governments at both State and Federal levels about vaccinations and they know we stand ready to help in whatever way we can.

This could involve facilitating vaccinations for sector workers or assisting with the rollout into regional communities, including those assessed as being vulnerable to COVID-19.

Whatever the eventual approach, I'd encourage mining and resources workers to get vaccinated when the opportunity arises for them.

It's now clear that vaccinations are the long-term key to avoiding many of the restrictions governments have had to put in place because of community spread of the virus.

In WA we've been fortunate that our lockdowns to date have been short and helped eliminate this spread.

What New South Wales is experiencing unfortunately reflects more challenging

circumstances that occur when spread can't be contained.

From a WA mining and resources perspective, increased vaccination across the community is a key to us unlocking the workforce mobility we need to take advantage of the opportunities we have in front of us.

There are currently \$140 billion of projects in the WA mining and resources pipeline.

It's in the interests of communities, families and workers right around the State that these projects are given the best possible chance to come to fruition.

Paul Everingham is the chief executive of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA