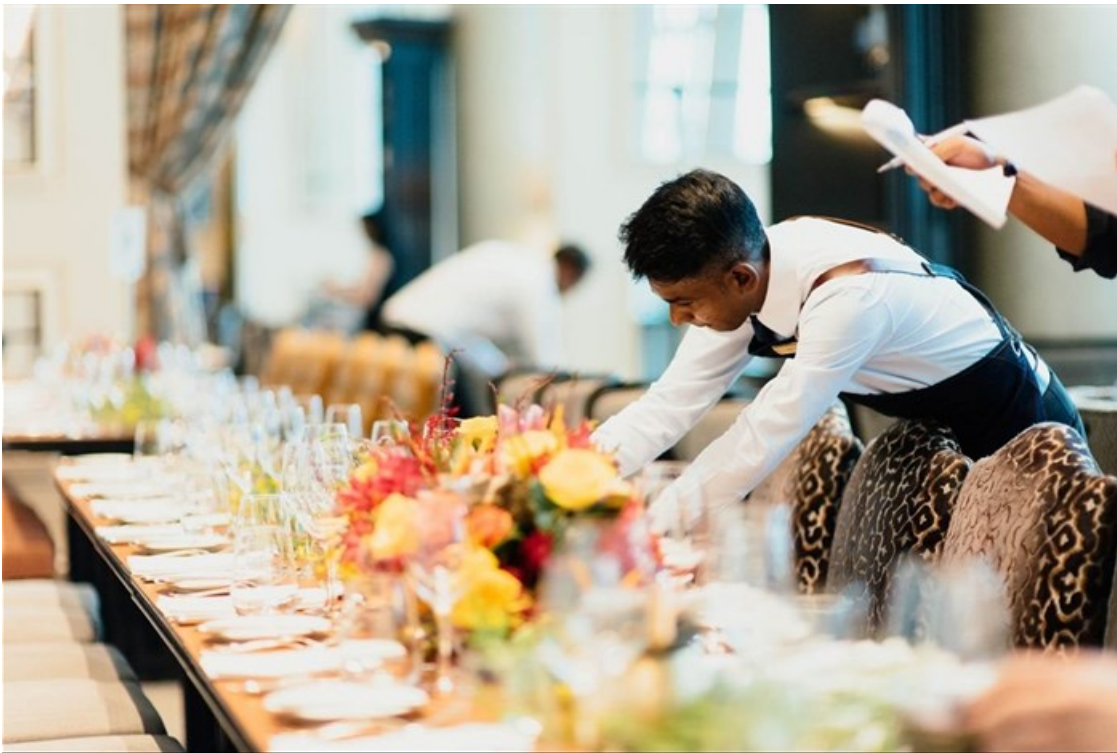


Government looks into 'soft incentives' for vaccinated travellers

Music festivals, sporting events and other gatherings are some of the 'soft incentive' measures being discussed by government in an effort to encourage South African citizens to get vaccinated, Health Minister Joe Phaala announced during a media briefing on 3 September.

These measures are set to be finalised over the next week and according to the minister, attendees would need to show some vaccination confirmation when attending these events. The initiative would also allow more sports, culture, and other businesses to open up.



Source: Supplied

The health minister said that consultations have already taken place with sporting bodies and events and arts groups to promote these events.

He added that the government's priority is rolling out vaccines, and it currently has no intention to introduce legislation around mandatory vaccinations.

Rosemary Anderson, Fedhasa national chairperson, says: "Fedhasa has been in support of mass vaccination of all those in South Africa, from the get-go and commends government for looking at measure to encourage citizens to get vaccinated, simultaneously this needs to be done sensitively and in harmony while respecting all our human rights."

Hospitality, tourism recovery

Anderson agrees that opening up music and sporting events will go a long way in the recovery efforts of the hospitality and tourism industry.

"South Africa is renowned for hosting world-class sporting, cultural and entertainment events, and it is most heartening to see that this will be happening once again - which will add handsomely to the recovery of our sector."

On the matter of vaccination passports, the minister conceded that this was a topical matter, especially as people look to regain more freedoms after lockdown.

According to the minister, it was an issue that would have to be dealt with by restaurants, businesses, and service providers within the confines of the current laws.

The minister also said that government would also look at easing lockdown restrictions over the next week.

Finding sustainable solutions

The health minister said an analysis would be conducted by the health department and the Covid-19 ministerial advisory committees in the coming days. If there is indeed a sustained decline, then restrictions will be eased, he said.

"We continue to emphasise that responsible trading together with mass vaccination of all those living in South Africa is the only sustainable solution in the industry's fight against Covid-19 – and we still believe it to be the way forward," says Anderson.

"One only needs to look at the UK, where even though they are being severely affected by the next Covid-19 wave, they are still able to continue opening up their economy – since the majority of their population is vaccinated and hence their residents are, by and large, protected from severe illness and their health care system is not being over-burdened by the latest wave they are going through.

"It is simply not sustainable to keep sectors like hospitality and tourism in South Africa under severe trading restrictions - which makes it financially unviable for many in the sector to continue trading in a viable way. It is a difficult balancing act for government – but the reality of the harm caused by the Covid-19 pandemic being dwarfed by the poverty pandemic is growing."

"Fedhasa has designed a robust set of health and safety protocols for Covid-19, and our members are acutely aware of the importance of adhering to these standards in order to safeguard the public and be able to continue trading. There is no sector as cognisant of the direct relationship between adherence to protocols and the recovery of the sector than the hospitality and tourism industry," concludes Anderson.