
Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability Meeting 13 December 2022 – Summary of Outcomes

The Committee heard from Advocacy for Inclusion, which presented on its [white paper on COVID-19 and people with disability](#). The paper:

- outlines the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with disability who face:
 - higher risk from infection. Some people continue to isolate to avoid infection.
 - reduced accessibility to health and support services, and
 - additional impacts from social barriers.
- highlights that COVID-19 is a public health and a disability rights issue, and
- makes recommendations on how governments can work with and support people with disability as the pandemic continues.

Advocacy for Inclusion also called for streamlined access to disability services for people who require them due to the impacts of long COVID.

The Department of Health and Aged Care (department) presented on current COVID-19 communications campaigns. These focus on:

- promoting COVID-safe behaviours
- raising awareness of PCR testing locations through the holiday period, and
- reminding the public that everyone is experiencing the pandemic differently, through the [launch of a video on the experiences of people with disability](#).

The department provided an update on COVID-19 testing and vaccination covering:

- arrangements for PCR testing in 2023. The Department has published [a fact sheet on access to PCR tests](#), which will remain free for people who need them.
- the durable protection four doses of COVID-19 vaccine offer from severe disease, and
- the similarity of protection offered by different mRNA boosters. The best booster to have is the one available to you.

A member noted that some vulnerable people have not received a booster for over 6 months and asked for consideration of booster recommendations that give GPs more flexibility to address patient circumstances.

The department's Health Economics and Research Division provided an update on work to report on COVID-19 mortality data for people with disability.

The Committee heard from the department's centre for disease control (CDC) policy team, which has been consulting on the role and functions of an Australian CDC. The department will provide advice to Government on the proposed scope, models and establishment of an Australian CDC. The Committee has provided input on a [consultation paper on the role and functions of an Australian CDC](#).

The Committee also discussed the report on the lessons it has learned throughout the pandemic.

NEXT STEPS

The department will:

- convey the Committee's input on booster recommendations to ATAGI
- seek the Committee's:
 - acceptance of the final report on the lessons it has learned throughout the pandemic, and
 - agreement that the report be provided to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and then the Government.
- schedule the Committee's next meeting for late-January 2023.

The Department of Social Services portfolio will investigate whether data is available on applications made to the National Disability Insurance Scheme arising from long COVID.