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**From:** NOJA, Marcelle <[Marcelle.Noja@health.gov.au](mailto:Marcelle.Noja@health.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 12:53 PM

**To:** s22 s22

**Cc:** ATAGI COVID19 WG s22; KELAHER, Catherine <[Catherine.Kelaher@health.gov.au](mailto:Catherine.Kelaher@health.gov.au)>; LANCASTER, Megan <[Megan.LANCASTER@Health.gov.au](mailto:Megan.LANCASTER@Health.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: Australian Open 2022 – Urgent Exemption Clarification [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s22

Looping in Cath as she has also been dealing with Tennis Aus (see attached).

s47C

Marcelle

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**From:** s22

**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 12:50 PM

**To:** NOJA, Marcelle <[Marcelle.Noja@health.gov.au](mailto:Marcelle.Noja@health.gov.au)>, s22

**Cc:** ATAGI COVID19 WG s22

**Subject:** FW: Australian Open 2022 – Urgent Exemption Clarification [SEC=OFFICIAL]

**Importance:** High

Hi Marcelle s22

We have received the attached letter from s47F Tennis Australia addressed to ATAGI co-chairs, concerning international tennis players. I have outlined the questions and our proposed responses, but request your advice/input.

Tennis Australia seeks advice in relation to the vaccination or exemption status of players and their associates travelling to Australia for the upcoming Australian Open tournament. They have interpreted ATAGI advice on medical exemptions to indicate that a person may be validly exempt from receiving a vaccination if they have had a COVID-19 infection in the previous six months. They seek confirmation of the following:

- Persons who have had COVID-19 and not received a vaccine dose satisfy the medical exemption requirements of ATAGI.
- Persons who have had COVID-19 prior to receiving one vaccine dose satisfy the medical exemption requirements of ATAGI.
- Persons who have received one vaccine dose and subsequently contracted COVID-19 satisfy the medical exemption requirements of ATAGI.
- In relation to the above three categories, whether there are any timing requirements to be considered (eg COVID-19 infection or the single vaccine dose must be within the previous six months)
- Persons who fall into either of these three categories and have received foreign vaccination exemptions will be approved for quarantine free entry into Australia

**Response:**

I can respond with the ATAGI advice, below, but appreciate your input regarding exemptions and quarantine upon arrival into Australia.

- ATAGI advises that people with laboratory confirmation of past infection can start their vaccination course, or complete the second dose if they have already had a first dose prior to being infected by SARS-CoV-2 as soon as they have recovered from the symptomatic infection. The requirement of minimum interval between the two doses should be met.
- It is acknowledged that there are a lack of data on the duration of protection from past infection and significant practical challenges with confirming past infection in some instances. ATAGI notes serological testing or other testing to detect current or previous infection with SARS-CoV-2 before vaccination is neither necessary nor recommended before vaccination.
- ATAGI notes that natural immunity from past infection is recognised in several countries. While evidence suggests that past infection reduces the risk of reinfection for at least six months (and thus may be regarded as a temporary exemption for vaccination for a maximum of six months), ATAGI recommends **two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine according to a recommended schedule is still required in order to be considered fully vaccinated**. Past infection with SARS-CoV-2 is not a contraindication to vaccination.

Many thanks

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Director | ATAGI COVID-19 Working Group Secretariat  
Medical Policy and ATAGI Branch  
National COVID Vaccine Taskforce

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GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

*We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.*

**Australian Government****Department of Health**

Mr Craig Tiley  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tennis Australia  
Private Bag 6060  
RICHMOND VICTORIA 3121

Dear Mr Tiley

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 November 2021 to Professors Allen Cheng and Christopher Blyth, Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) Co-Chairs. I am responding to you on their behalf.

The safety of the Australian population has always been the Australian Government's highest priority, and it is for this reason that decisions regarding COVID-19 vaccines have been, and continue to be, based on the expert medical advice of ATAGI.

Australia's definition of what constitutes a *fully vaccinated* person is set by ATAGI. According to ATAGI, a person is considered fully vaccinated seven days after completing a course, including a mixed dose, of a vaccine approved or recognised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Current TGA approved and recognised vaccines are as follows:

- Two doses at least 14 days apart of:
  - AstraZeneca Vaxzevria
  - AstraZeneca Covishield
  - Pfizer/Biontech Comirnaty
  - Moderna Spikevax
  - Sinovac Coronavac
  - Bharat Covaxin
  - Sinopharm BBIBP-CorV (for ages 18-60 only)

The recommended interval for administration of a second COVID-19 vaccine dose is 4 to 12 weeks after the first dose. A longer interval is acceptable if the second dose cannot be administered during this time window. The minimum interval for administration of a second dose is 14 days.

- One dose of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen-Cilag COVID Vaccine.

ATAGI advises that past infection with SARS-CoV-2 is not a contraindication to vaccination. People with laboratory confirmation of past infection can start their vaccination course, or complete the second dose if they have already had a first dose prior to being infected by SARS-CoV-2, as soon as they have recovered from the symptomatic infection. The minimum interval requirement between the two doses must still be met.

ATAGI notes that natural immunity from past infection is recognised in several countries, however ATAGI also notes the challenge of confirming past infection and uncertainties of the duration of protection. While evidence suggests that past infection reduces the risk of reinfection for at least six months (and thus may be regarded as a temporary exemption for vaccination for a maximum of six months), ATAGI advises that two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine (or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine) according to a recommended schedule is required in order to be considered fully vaccinated.

In response to your specific questions, the implications of the above advice are as follows:

- people who have previously had COVID-19 and not received a vaccine dose are not considered fully vaccinated.
- people who have had COVID-19 prior to receiving one vaccine dose are not considered fully vaccinated (unless the vaccine was Johnson & Johnson, in which case they are considered fully vaccinated)
- people who have received one vaccine dose and subsequently contracted COVID-19 are not considered fully vaccinated (unless the vaccine was Johnson & Johnson).

ATAGI is not responsible for border control issues, however the Australian Border Force has advised that people must meet the *fully vaccinated* definition set by ATAGI to gain quarantine-free entry into Australia. This means that people who fall into any of the above three categories will not be approved for quarantine-free entry, regardless of whether they have received foreign vaccination exemptions.

I understand that travellers who are medically unable to be vaccinated need to provide evidence of a medical contraindication. This must indicate an inability to be vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine because of a medical condition, as evidenced by a certificate containing:

- the traveller's name as it appears in the passport
- details of the issuing medical practitioner and the date of the consultation
- details that clearly state that the traveller has a medical condition which means they cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccination (i.e. vaccination is contraindicated).

The receiving state or territory is responsible for determining how a person is managed (in terms of quarantine) based on the information in the Australian Travel Declaration and their vaccination status. States and territories may not accept medical exemptions for the purposes of quarantine-free entry. I understand that my colleagues in the Office of Health Protection will be providing further advice on this to you shortly.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

*Lisa Schofield*

Lisa Schofield PSM  
First Assistant Secretary  
National COVID Taskforce  
18 November 2021

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN RELEASED UNDER  
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (CTH)  
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



**The Hon Greg Hunt MP**  
**Minister for Health and Aged Care**

Ref No: MC21-037808

Mr Craig Tiley  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tennis Australia  
[CTiley@Tennis.com.au](mailto:CTiley@Tennis.com.au)

Dear Mr Tiley *Craig*

29 NOV 2021

I refer to your correspondence of 10 November 2021 to Professor Allan Cheng and Professor Christopher Blyth, co-chairs of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) concerning individuals travelling to Australia for the 2022 Australian Open who are not fully vaccinated.

I understand you have received support from a number of areas in my Department and that Ms Lisa Schofield, First Assistant Secretary of the National COVID-19 Taskforce, responded to your correspondence on 18 November 2021 about ATAGI advice on being fully vaccinated. I also note your follow-up correspondence to her on 22 November 2021. I understand that further advice was provided to Tennis Australia (Senior Legal Counsel) by my Department through the Office of Health Protection and the Office for Sport.

At this time, decisions to support travel requests into Australia are carefully assessed by the Australian Border Force. The key consideration for the Commonwealth in granting travel approvals, including quarantine and flight arrangements, is to ensure that returning Australians are not displaced and that the general Australian community is protected from unnecessary health risk.

To support this aim, the Australian Border Force has advised that people must be fully vaccinated, as defined by the ATAGI, to gain quarantine-free entry into Australia. As detailed in Ms Schofield's correspondence of 18 November 2021, this means that people who do not meet the ATAGI's definition of fully vaccinated will not be approved for quarantine-free entry, regardless of whether they have received foreign vaccination exemptions.

In relation to your specific questions, I can confirm that people who contracted COVID-19 within the past six months and seek to enter Australia from overseas, and have not received two doses of a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)-approved or TGA-recognised vaccine (or one dose of the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine), are not considered fully vaccinated.

The requirements for meeting the ATAGI's definition of fully vaccinated can be found online at: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) using the search term 'COVID-19 vaccinations'.

Your correspondence of 22 November 2021 to Ms Schofield asked further questions in relation to the grounds for recording an exemption on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).



I can advise the following, noting however that advice concerning the AIR is applicable for domestic purposes only – such as interstate travel, or meeting workplace vaccination requirements – and does not apply in the context of international borders.

- temporary medical contraindications can be reported to the AIR for individuals who meet the relevant requirements in accordance with the ATAGI's clinical guidance
- medical contraindications can only be assessed and reported to the AIR by eligible health professionals, including GPs, paediatricians and infectious disease physicians
- reporting in the AIR is for domestic purposes only and does not apply in the context of international borders.

As you are aware, the conduct of sport and recreation activities, including major sporting events and prevailing quarantine arrangements, is at the discretion of the relevant jurisdiction. We encourage travellers to consult the requirements of the state or territory they plan to visit to compete in the Australia Open and summer series lead-in events, to ensure they can meet the relevant entry requirements. Further information on Victoria's restrictions can be viewed online at: [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au) using the search term 'coronavirus'.

I encourage sporting organisations, including Tennis Australia, to continue to work with the Australian Border Force, state and territory health authorities and venues on COVID-safe plans for events, including for international travel where this is relevant.

Finally, it is important to note that each individual is responsible for ensuring they meet the requirements for travel to and within Australia. You can find further information at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website at: [www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au) using the search term 'COVID-19 vaccinations'.

I would like to extend my full support to Tennis Australia and the players for a successful and exciting Australian Open for 2022. Should you require any additional information, please contact Mr Andrew Godkin, First Assistant Secretary of the Office for Sport Division at: [Andrew.Godkin@health.gov.au](mailto:Andrew.Godkin@health.gov.au) who will be pleased to assist should you have further questions.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Greg Hunt

cc: Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services and Minister for Sport