

11 January 2022

Professor Paul Kelly  
 Chief Medical Officer  
 Australian Government  
[paul.kelly@health.gov.au](mailto:paul.kelly@health.gov.au)

Dear Professor Kelly,

As the peak body for obstetrics, gynaecology and women's health in Australia, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG; the College) acknowledges the risks posed to our community, health workers, patients and all Australians by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The College also emphasises its commitment to respond to this challenge in a meaningful way. This is a complex and rapidly evolving situation. RANZCOG is determined to communicate the most up-to-date information to its members, their patients, and the broader community.

Australia's vaccination and booster rollout, thanks to the efforts of Lieutenant General John Frewen and the COVID-19 vaccine task force, has been largely successful.

Unfortunately, RANZCOG is aware of considerable, persistent vaccine hesitancy amongst pregnant women across Australia in both public and private sectors. This is consistent with clinician reports of the significantly higher hospital admission rates for unvaccinated pregnant women with COVID -19<sup>i</sup>.

With vaccine uptake by pregnant women remaining dangerously below expectations, and as Omicron cases continue to surge, RANZCOG would suggest that an Australian Government funded campaign to counter vaccine hesitancy amongst pregnant and breast-feeding women is called for.

The advertising campaign would highlight the serious risks catching COVID-19 for the unvaccinated and the benefits of the vaccines in protecting mothers, their babies, and their families.

The College notes that a national, government funded campaign urging pregnant women to get their first, second or booster jab has been recently launched in the UK<sup>ii</sup>.

RANZCOG would work closely with the Australian College of Midwives and other, College affiliated, key stakeholders to bring national expertise to the campaign as well as ensuring multicultural communities throughout Australia have relevant information regarding the COVID-19 vaccination program in pregnancy.

It is critical as Australia adapts to live with COVID-19 and to move past the current pandemic that we build and maintain confidence in the safety of the vaccines available for pregnant women.

RANZCOG would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this proposal further with you.

Your sincerely

s47F

s47F

Cc The Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health [greg.hunt.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:greg.hunt.mp@aph.gov.au)

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<sup>i</sup> *Unvaxxed pregnant women warned*, The Australian, January 5, 2022

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/science/unvaxxed-pregnant-women-warned/news-story/e64991bd68a1612f327d747da2d55f3e>

<sup>ii</sup> New campaign launched urging pregnant women to Get Boosted Now, [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), January 10, 2022 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-launched-urging-pregnant-women-to-get-boosted-now>

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# Australian Government

## Department of Health

Chief Medical Officer

s47F

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
1 Bowen Crescent  
MELBOURNE VIC 3004

Dear s47F

Thank you for your letter dated 11 January 2022 on the importance of specific communication for pregnant women on COVID-19 vaccination. I apologise for the delay in my reply.

I would like to acknowledge the important role the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) has played during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The vaccination of pregnant women against COVID-19 is a high priority for the Department of Health, and we have undertaken a range of communication activities encourage uptake amongst pregnant women.

Information on pregnancy and COVID-19 vaccines can be found on the department's website here: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/who-can-get-vaccinated/pregnant-women>

In addition, the department has entered content partnerships with trusted expert organisations to develop and disseminate information, for example:

- Australian Academy of Science – [Pregnancies, periods and COVID-19 vaccines: what you need to know](#)
- Australian College of Midwives – [COVID-19 vaccination online e-learning space](#)
- Midwife Cath's podcast – Professor Alison McMillan discusses COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy – [Birth, Baby and Beyond](#).

The department also includes messaging through social media channels, case study videos and via partnerships through the national campaign with popular podcast platforms such as Mamamia.

We highly value the expertise and input that RANZCOG provides and would welcome working closely with your team to continue develop appropriate, engaging information on the importance of COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant women.

I would like to invite your team to engage with the department's Public Information Branch, who can discuss your insights and recommendations in further detail. I have asked the team to contact you to arrange a meeting a with your team at a time convenient to them.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with RANZCOG to maintain confidence in the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy.

Yours sincerely



Professor Paul Kelly  
Chief Medical Officer

17 February 2022

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**From:** [PEISLEY, Hope](#)  
**To:** s47F [SCHOFIELD, Lisa](#); [ATAGI COVID19 WG](#)  
**Cc:** [News old](#); s47F  
**Subject:** RE: Joint statement RANZCOG and ATAGI [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 8 June 2021 12:59:21 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

Thanks s47F - I'm working with our media team who is working with the Office media team on timing for this week. Will come back as soon as I have the timing,  
 Hope

**Hope Peisley**  
 Assistant Secretary

Vaccine Policy Branch  
 COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce Division  
 Australian Government Department of Health

s47F [@health.gov.au](#) |

s47F

Location: s47F  
 GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

s47F

[@health.gov.au](#)

*The Department of Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continued connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present.*

100 years signature block



**From:** s47F

**Sent:** Monday, 7 June 2021 8:25 PM

**To:** PEISLEY, Hope, s47F [SCHOFIELD, Lisa](#) ; ATAGI COVID19 WG

**Subject:** Joint statement RANZCOG and ATAGI

**REMINDER:** Think before you click! This email originated from outside our organisation. Only click links or open attachments if you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Hope

Thanks so much for notifying me today that the Office is happy to proceed ensuring this coincides with when the CMO is scheduled for a press conference.

I have copied in s47F of RANZCOG so we can be sure all parties are aligned.

As per the brief the plan for dissemination will be on the web (as per ATAGI's usual format) and in a position statement from RANZCOG (with their usual branding).

There will also be correspondence from RANZCOG to its members which I understand is their usual practice when issuing statements, but s47F can correct me if I am wrong.

I am also working with NCIRS to update the ATAGI decision aid in parallel.

Please let me know what else we need to be aware of to ensure the correct process is followed.

Thanks

s47F

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From: s47F  
 To: s47F  
 Cc: [ATAGI COVID19 WG](#); s47F  
 Subject: Re: Medical exemptions  
 Date: Thursday, 2 September 2021 12:49:39 PM  
 Attachments: [image001.png](#)

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Thanks s47F  
 Much appreciated

From: s47F  
 Sent: Thursday, September 2, 2021 12:44 PM  
 To: s47F  
 Cc: s47F; [health.gov.au](mailto:health.gov.au); s47F  
 Subject: Re: Medical exemptions  
 Dear s47F

Thank you for your email. RANZCOG is of the view that pregnancy should **not** be listed as a reason for COVID vaccination exemption as this would be inconsistent with the RANZCOG/ATAGI advice to pregnant women that vaccination is safe, protective and recommended.

Best wishes

s47F

s47F



The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
 College House | 254–260 Albert Street | East Melbourne VIC 3002

s47F | w: [ranzcog.edu.au](http://ranzcog.edu.au)

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On 2 Sep 2021, at 9:09 am, s47F wrote:

Dear s47F  
 Thank you for taking my call this morning.

As discussed, the Department of Health and ATAGI would be keen to understand RANZCOG's position on pregnant women being included/excluded from the temporary exemption section of the medical exemption form.

Thank you for advising

Kind regards

s47F

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