



Frequently Asked Questions – International Agreement on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response

5 July 2024

Frequently Asked Questions on the development of a new pandemic agreement on pandemic preparedness, prevention and response.

What is the new pandemic agreement?

The new international agreement on pandemic preparedness, prevention and response is sometimes also called a:

- pandemic treaty
- pandemic accord
- pandemic instrument

In December 2021, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) was established by the World Health Assembly to draft and negotiate a new international convention, agreement or other instrument (for example, a treaty), on pandemic prevention, preparedness, prevention and response (the pandemic agreement). All 194 WHO Member States, including Australia, are able to participate in the INB.

Why do we need a new pandemic instrument?

The aim of the new pandemic agreement is to strengthen the international community's efforts in responding to future pandemics. The development of a new agreement was driven by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to ensure communities, governments and the global community are better prepared in the future.

The decision to develop a new pandemic agreement followed several independent reports, including from the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, which recommended the development of a new instrument, such as a treaty, to strengthen global health systems.

More information on the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response can be found here: [The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response](#).

Has the new pandemic instrument been signed?

No. The pandemic agreement is currently under development and negotiation. All 194 Member States of the WHO, including Australia, are able to participate in the negotiations. The negotiated text of a new pandemic agreement is expected to be finalised for adoption, at the 78th World Health Assembly in May 2025, or earlier if possible in 2024.

Will Australia become a party to the pandemic agreement?

The Australia Government will continue to actively engage in the INB. Australia will advocate for our interests and priorities to be reflected in the new pandemic agreement and will decide whether to agree to the pandemic agreement once negotiations have concluded.

The pandemic agreement will be considered by WHO Member States at the 78th World Health Assembly in May 2025, or earlier if possible in 2024.

In accordance with Australia's treaty-making process, the pandemic agreement will be subject to appropriate government and parliamentary processes and scrutiny before binding action is taken. For more information, see [impacts on domestic Australian law](#).

Will the pandemic agreement replace or change Australia's Constitution?

No. The Australian Constitution can only be changed by referendum, which requires a public vote by the people of Australia in accordance with the requirements of section 128 of the Australian Constitution.

Will the pandemic agreement change Australia's domestic law?

A new pandemic agreement may create international legal obligations for Australia. However, this doesn't automatically change Australian law – only Parliament can do this.

Any new pandemic agreement must be subject to appropriate parliamentary processes before Australia can take binding action. This includes consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on treaties (JSCOT).

Following consideration by JSCOT, any changes to Australian law to implement the new pandemic agreement would have to be considered and passed by Parliament. For more information, see [impacts on domestic Australian law](#).

Where can I find further information on the pandemic agreement?

Further information on the pandemic agreement is available on:

[The International Negotiating Body website](#)

[Q&As on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response accord](#)

[World Health Assembly 2024 Intergovernmental Negotiating Body Outcomes](#)