



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

July 2025

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, were able to participate in the INB. The Pandemic Agreement was agreed by WHO Member States at the 78th World Health Assembly.

The Pandemic Agreement establishes new international rules to strengthen international cooperation for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response that will:

- strengthen access to vaccines and other health products,
- strengthen multi-sectoral disease surveillance, including by integrating a One Health approach for pandemic prevention,
- enhance health system resilience to better position countries to prepare for and respond to future pandemics, and
- strengthen cooperation on research and development including the production of pandemic-related health products, and

The full text of the WHO Pandemic Agreement can be found here: [WHO Pandemic Agreement](#).

Why do we need a new Pandemic Agreement?

The aim of the new Pandemic Agreement is to strengthen the international community's efforts in responding to future pandemics. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted 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 Agreement been signed?

No. The Pandemic Agreement was agreed by WHO Member States at the 78th World Health Assembly. Steps remain to finalise technical and operational details of a Pathogen Access and Benefits Sharing (PABS) System, to be included as an annex to the Agreement. The Pandemic Agreement will not enter into force until the PABS Annex has been agreed.

The Pandemic Agreement will be subject to appropriate parliamentary processes before Australia can take binding action.

What is a PABS Annex?

A PABS System Annex will facilitate timely sharing of data and material for scientific research as well as vaccines and other health products.

Negotiations on a PABS Annex will be WHO Member State-led and will commence under a new Intergovernmental Working Group from July 2025. Australia will engage in these negotiations to advance our interests and ensure the PABS System helps Australia and the international community to better prepare for future pandemics.

WHO Member States have agreed to report to the 79th World Health Assembly in May 2026 on the outcome of the PABS Annex negotiations. Once the PABS Annex is finalised, the Pandemic Agreement will open for signature, which is not expected until at least mid-2026. Australia will commence its domestic treaty-making process after this occurs.

Will Australia become a party to the Pandemic Agreement?

The Australian Government actively engaged in the INB, to advocate for our interests and priorities to be reflected in the new pandemic agreement.

In accordance with Australia's treaty-making process, the Pandemic Agreement will be subject to appropriate government and parliamentary processes and scrutiny before any 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.

The 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](#).

Will the Pandemic Agreement affect Australia's sovereignty?

The Pandemic Agreement reaffirms the sovereignty of States in addressing public health matters. It does not provide WHO with any authority to direct Australia's response to a future pandemic. Australia will retain full sovereignty in making public health decisions which promote the interests of Australians.

As with all Australian laws, these can only be made and changed by an act of the Australian Parliament, and not by an international treaty or other agreement.

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](#)
- [WHO Pandemic Agreement](#).