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Prioritising Residential Aged Care

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE FOR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES

3 February 2021

Update on Australia's COVID-19 vaccines for residential aged care facilities

The Australian Government has a strategy to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to everyone living in Australia. The [vaccine roll-out roadmap](#) outlines the staged roll-out of the vaccine to priority groups, which is expected to commence from late-February 2021.

A COVID-19 vaccine is just one part of keeping our community safe and healthy. It is important for everyone to continue and maintain COVIDSafe practises, such as hand hygiene, physical distancing and wearing masks when required, particularly in residential aged care facilities (RACFs).

Residential aged care workers and residents will be among the first people who can choose to receive the vaccine in the first roll-out phase (Phase 1a).

More information about the roll-out is outlined in the [Australian COVID-19 Vaccination Policy](#) and the [COVID-19 Vaccines National Roll-Out Strategy](#).



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Vaccine safety and effectiveness

The Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) rigorous assessment process of potential COVID-19 vaccines will ensure approved vaccines are safe and effective.

All vaccines are thoroughly tested for safety before they are approved for use in Australia. This includes careful analysis of clinical trial data, ingredients, chemistry, manufacturing and other factors.

The Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been provisionally approved by the TGA for people 16 years and older. The approval is subject to strict conditions, and Pfizer will be required to continue providing information to the TGA on the safety, efficacy and quality of the vaccine. More information on this approval is available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

Provisional approval of the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is currently anticipated in February, subject to approval by the TGA.

How the vaccine will be distributed to RACFs and administered in the first phase

The Australian Government is responsible for leading the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccination Program for the large majority of RACFs in consultation with peak bodies and state and territory governments. However, NSW, SA and VIC state governments will have responsibility for leading the vaccine roll out to their state run RACFs.

RACFs have a key role to play in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

Administration of a COVID-19 vaccine to residential aged care workers and residents will be done by an in-reach Commonwealth vaccination workforce. This means an additional skilled vaccine workforce, separate to the RACF workers, will work in partnership with facilities and be trained to visit RACFs and administer the vaccine to workers and residents. More information on this workforce is available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

NSW, SA and VIC state governments will provide further information on the administration of COVID-19 vaccines to residents and workers in their state run RACFs.

More information on consent and registering people for vaccination will be available soon.

COVID-19 vaccination is voluntary, but strongly encouraged

COVID-19 vaccines will be safe, free and voluntary for everyone living in Australia.

While the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) strongly encourages COVID-19 vaccination, at this time AHPPC has not recommended mandating COVID-19 vaccination for the aged care workforce. The AHPPC will continue to monitor the situation and update its advice accordingly.

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Keep up to date with trusted information

The Department of Health will continue to provide updates.

You can find information, including translated information, on the Department of Health's [COVID-19 vaccines website](#). You can also subscribe to receive the [COVID-19 Vaccines Update](#).