
**Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus
(COVID-19) for People with Disability
Meeting 1 February 2022 – Summary of Outcomes**

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Steph Davis, presented on:

- current epidemiology and the Omicron variant
- approval and availability of treatments for COVID-19
- expectations about the upcoming flu season, and
- other future considerations, including planning and the possibility of new COVID-19 variants emerging.

Committee members with lived experience of disability and carers expressed concerns about:

- COVID risks for children with disability returning to school
- compliance with measures intended to facilitate safe learning environments, such as rapid antigen tests and ventilation, and
- difficulties National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants are experiencing finding support workers at short notice due to the high proportion of workers isolating.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission provided information on emergency workforce arrangements available to ensure continuity of supports. Members requested further consideration of how self-managed NDIS participants can access emergency supports.

The Committee discussed infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance for people with disability and the disability sector, including:

- current guidance on the use of particulate filtering respirators (PFRs) and ventilation controls
- draft factsheets on IPC the Department of Health (Department) is developing for people with disability and disability support workers, and
- the importance of using personal protective equipment as part of a wider infection control strategy. This includes vaccination, physical distancing, isolation when indicated, monitoring for symptoms and the use of rapid antigen tests where available.

The Infection Control Expert Group will consider the need for disability specific advice on masks and ventilation controls on 2 February 2022.

The Department presented data on COVID-19 vaccination rates for people with disability by:

- Local Government Area (LGA), focusing on areas where vaccination rates are lagging the general population, and
- disability type.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will:

- circulate information on recently approved COVID-19 treatments
- seek further input from Committee members, Commonwealth agencies and states and territories on lessons learnt throughout the pandemic, with a view to completing an initial evaluation by March 2022
- seek further feedback from Committee members on the draft IPC factsheet for people with disability being developed by the Department, and
- invite state and territory education representatives to the next Disability and Health Sector Consultation Committee to discuss return to school for children with disability.

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee is scheduled for 15 February 2022.