



## Response to the COVID-19 pandemic – Protecting Australia with COVID-19 vaccines

The Australian Government is providing an additional investment of more than \$900 million to keep Australians safe from COVID-19 by ensuring access to safe and effective vaccines for eligible populations until the end of 2022.

More than 56 million doses have been administered around Australia, making it one of the most vaccinated nations in the world.

Over 19.5 million (around 95%) Australians aged 16 years and over are now fully vaccinated, and more than 12.7 million people aged 16 years and over have had a third or booster dose.

Our Government has invested in a suite of effective, safe and proven COVID-19 vaccines, including both the revolutionary mRNA vaccine technology and more traditional protein-based vaccines. Securing a range of vaccine types has ensured there is sufficient supply of vaccines for everyone in Australia. Once approved for use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and in line with recommendations by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), having a range of effective vaccines available permits Australians to make an informed choice over which vaccine they receive.

This funding will mean those eligible Australians who have not yet had a primary course of vaccinations will be able to access a safe and effective vaccine should they choose to do so. It will also continue the booster dose program.

This funding will support the potential rollout of COVID-19 vaccines for newly eligible cohorts, in line with approvals by the TGA and in line with advice from ATAGI. This includes potential primary course vaccinations for children aged under four years, booster doses for children five years and over, and winter boosters for priority populations.

It will also ensure the nation is prepared should it be determined that future booster doses will be of benefit before the end of the year.

The funding supports the:

- Whole of Government COVID Vaccine Administration Partners Program (VAPP) channel
- Primary Care Vaccination channels, and
- State and territory channels (which have flexibility to activate as required to meet prevailing demand).

Among the investment is:

- \$839.8 million to support continued access to COVID-19 vaccines through current administration channel arrangements including:
  - primary care, through the Medicare Benefits Schedule, associated Practice Incentive Payments and in-reach clinics, Community Pharmacies and Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics
  - the Whole of Government VAPP panel for targeted vaccinations for priority populations including aged care and shared disability accommodation sites and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
  - Primary Health Networks and tailored communications to reach vulnerable populations, and
  - state and territory clinics to deliver primary course and booster vaccinations (as outlined in the Fact Sheet *Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic – Health response extension*).
- \$70.9 million to extend the current operations of the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce to support the planning and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines until 31 December 2022, and
- \$66.7 million to continue the necessary data and digital systems underpinning the vaccine rollout; enabling ordering and distribution of vaccines, providing easy access to book vaccine appointments, reporting and recording vaccinations and adverse events, and enabling consumers to view COVID-19 information.

This new investment brings the total expenditure on COVID-19 vaccines and the vaccine rollout to more than \$17 billion since the pandemic began.

### **Why is this important?**

Maintaining high levels of vaccination against COVID-19 is the best way to protect Australians against the worst impacts of the virus, preventing severe disease, hospitalisation and death.

The Australian Government is committed to providing all people in Australia access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in line with TGA approvals and ATAGI recommendations.

The National COVID Vaccine Taskforce has been successful in delivering more than 56 million COVID-19 vaccine doses across the country, making us one of the most vaccinated populations in the world.

The Taskforce has worked closely with health care providers, general practitioners, pharmacists, state and territory governments, advisory groups and industry to ensure supplies of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are equitably distributed around the country.

The planning and delivery of millions of doses of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines will continue as health experts assess relevant information from Australia and around the world including about immune response to COVID-19 and emerging variants.

### **Who will benefit?**

All Australians benefit from continued access to free, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, including booster doses.

Continuing the current successful administration channel arrangements will help to maintain protection of at-risk groups and children as they become eligible.

Funding certainty is assured for vaccination providers for the remainder of the year.

### **How much will this cost?**

The Australian Government is investing \$977.4 million over two years from 2021–22 to 2022–23.