

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group

Update: 12 November 2021

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its eleventh meeting on 12 November 2021. Members include leaders from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities and their representative organisations, health experts and medical and public health practitioners. The Advisory Group meets monthly and publishes a communique after each meeting. It has three Working Groups: the Communication Working Group, the Vaccination Strategy Working Group and the Data Working Group.

The Advisory Group plays a main role in supporting the Australian Government to provide an evidence-based response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It builds on the Department of Health's long engagement with culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse stakeholders. The Advisory Group gives advice on the experience of multicultural people and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It recommends options to lessen the health impacts of COVID-19 on people and communities from multicultural backgrounds.

Updates from this meeting

The National COVID Vaccine Taskforce (the Taskforce) gave an update on the Australian COVID-19 Vaccination Program. On 27 October 2021, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) provisionally approved the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine as a booster vaccine for people 18 years and above. Individuals are eligible for the booster at six months or later after having their second doses.

From 8 November, community pharmacies can administer the Pfizer vaccine. New incentive payments will be available for community pharmacies to support the vaccination of aged and disability care residents and workers until 30 June 2022. Since 29 October 2021 general practices have been able to apply to administer the Spikevax (Moderna) vaccine.

Vaccination providers in Australia can report vaccinations received overseas to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). These include: Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca), Pfizer, Moderna and Janssen-Cilag COVID-19 Vaccine administered on or after 1 October 2020, Coronavac (Sinovac), Covishield (AstraZeneca) and Sinopharm BBIBP-CorV (manufactured by Sinopharm, China). The Department of Health is working with Services Australia to include Bharat Biotech Covaxin (manufactured by Bharat Biotech, India). The TGA continues to review data on other vaccines. Members discussed processes and access to vaccines for people coming to Australia without approved vaccinations.

On 8 November, the Department launched a dedicated service to the National Coronavirus Helpline (1800 020 080). This line supports people with disability, their family, friends, and carers and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. The dedicated team gives support to callers and helps to book vaccine appointments. Where a caller needs clinical

advice, the line transfers them to a trained clinical call handler. For people with disability, this service complements the [Disability Gateway](#) helpline.

The Taskforce gave an update on the vaccine rollout in aged care. The rollout of booster doses in residential aged care facilities began on 8 November 2021. On 5 November 2021 the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee recommended COVID-19 vaccine mandates for in-home and community aged care workers. Reporting third doses and booster doses will become mandatory later in November 2021.

The Taskforce gave an update on the \$180 million [Living with COVID primary care package](#), which Minister Hunt announced on 29 October 2021. Members discussed ensuring data collection on testing and positive cases for multicultural communities. Members emphasised the important role of Primary Health Networks and general practitioners. Members discussed ensuring smooth patient journeys for people who test positive to COVID-19.

The Taskforce gave an update on work to improve reporting of vaccine coverage among multicultural communities. The Taskforce has started sharing data with the jurisdictions and Primary Health Networks to inform planning. Members discussed sharing ideas between jurisdictions about engaging with groups with low vaccination rates. The Taskforce continues to work with the Advisory Group on this new and complex data asset.

The Department of Health gave an update on the introduction of Rapid Antigen Testing. The Commonwealth has undertaken a pilot of Rapid Antigen Tests as a screening and incident management tool in residential aged care facilities. Self-tests have been available since 1 November 2021. Information about tests needs to be simple and available in other languages and accessible formats such as video.

The Department provided an update on the communication campaign. The 'Spread Freedom' campaign continues across television, social, radio, press and out-of-home media. The Taskforce sent a newsletter to multicultural stakeholders with translated information about the booster announcement. The Taskforce is developing materials about boosters and third doses. Partnership activities with print, online and radio media outlets continue.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) gave an update on community consultation activities. Interest in the [CALD COVID-19 Health Small Grants Fund](#) has been high. To date FECCA has awarded more than 200 grants to community groups across Australia. The grants support community groups to design and deliver activities encouraging vaccine uptake in their communities. FECCA and the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators are trialling a community review panel model to translate public health materials.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs, Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, Northern Territory Government, gave an overview of community engagement activities with multicultural communities in the Northern Territory.

Migration Council Australia (MCA) gave an overview of recent work by the Migrant and Refugee Health Partnership (MRHP). In 2019 MRHP published a [competency standards framework](#) for clinicians working with people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. MRHP is now working with the World Health Organisation to develop global competency standards.

The Taskforce gave an update on the vaccine rollout for people with disability. Vaccination rates continue to increase for NDIS participants and workers. Most jurisdictions have mandated vaccines for disability workers. The rollout of the booster program has started. The Taskforce has published and shared information on the booster program and third doses for people with disability.

The Advisory Group will meet again in December 2021.

See [Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group](#) and [terms of reference](#) for more information.