

## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group

### Update: 17 September 2021

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its ninth meeting on 17 September 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 13 September, eligibility opened to individuals aged 12 to 15 years. All people in Australia aged 12 to 59 are eligible for the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine or Spikevax (Moderna) vaccine. People aged 18-59 years, can choose to receive the Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) vaccine following an appropriate assessment of suitability by a qualified health professional; and if they provide verbal or written consent. The Taskforce is simplifying the Vaccine Clinic Finder.

More Pfizer doses are arriving in Australia during September 2021, allowing the Taskforce to increase doses for delivery to general practices. Members discussed eligibility for mRNA vaccines. Some jurisdictions have opened eligibility for mRNA vaccines to people aged 60 years and over. For consistency, primary care providers can take bookings based on eligibility criteria in their state or territory.

The Taskforce also provided an update, for the Australian Border Force, on the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out in the Immigration Detention Network (IDN). The roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination program for consenting detainees commenced in early August 2021. The Taskforce will meet with the Department of Home Affairs and Australian Border Force to discuss arrangements.

On 27 August 2021, the Taskforce released guidance for general practices, Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics and Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services to do off-site vaccinations. The Government is providing Primary Health Networks with over \$10 million in extra funding to support innovative, local, short-term vaccination activities to help vulnerable populations access the vaccines.

Members discussed walk-in vaccination, the role of nurses, and simplifying the booking system. Members also discussed proof of vaccination for people who do not have Medicare or were vaccinated overseas.

Community pharmacies began offering the Moderna vaccine to people aged 12 years and over from the week of 20 September 2021. The Taskforce is supporting community pharmacies to use interpreting services. The Free Interpreting Service was extended for the time being to non-Medicare clients of pharmacists who offer COVID-19 vaccines. Members discussed compliance, processes for people who do not have Medicare, off-site vaccination, and training and resourcing for bicultural/bilingual workers.

The Taskforce also updated the Group on the rollout in residential aged care. Vaccination rates among aged care workers are high across all jurisdictions as mandatory vaccination for aged care workers began on 17 September 2021. The Commonwealth supports all workers to get vaccinated.

The department presented options for reporting the vaccination of people from multicultural backgrounds, based on feedback from members. Members discussed population denominators and using data to support service planning and delivery.

The department provided an update on the communication campaign. New resources include animations, videos with bilingual doctors, videos with community members and communications around the Moderna vaccine.

Associate Professor Holly Seale, School of Population Health, University of New South Wales presented on the [Glossary of Medical Terminology for Immunisation and Vaccine](#). The glossary is in simple English and other languages.

The Taskforce updated members on the roll-out for people with disability. Vaccination rates among National Disability Insurance Scheme participants and disability care workers are increasing. It is also updating the stakeholder engagement and communication plan.

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) gave an update on the communication and consultation activities it is leading.

As at 17 September 2021, FECCA awarded more than 90 grants from the [CALD COVID-19 Health Small Grants Fund](#). The grants support multicultural groups to design and carry out grassroots communication activities. FECCA is supporting organisations with their applications and activities.

Members discussed the process for children who test positive for COVID-19, or whose parents have tested positive. Members discussed access to data on COVID-19 prevalence in multicultural communities. Members also discussed changes to Medicare Benefits Schedule items, and access to mental health care and chronic disease management plans for patients who cannot use video consultations.

The Advisory Group will meet again in October 2021.

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