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Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group

Update: 2 March 2021

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its third meeting on 2 March 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 following each meeting. It has two Working Groups: the Communication Working Group and the Vaccination Strategy Working Group.

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

Updates from this meeting

The Department of Health (the department) gave a brief update on the COVID-19 situation. The department thanked members for their help with progressing critical pieces of work which support the vaccination rollout to culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities. As agreed by members at the previous meeting, the department has begun to convene forums with community representatives. The department provided an update on the forums that have happened, which include:

- Culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse community leaders roundtable on 4 February
- Information session with settlement service providers on 17 February
- Religious leaders roundtable on 24 February

Further roundtables are being organised with youth, women and health practitioners for the coming weeks.

The meeting then focused on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout strategy. The Advisory Group discussed how to best support people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities in residential aged care facilities. Areas of focus included:

- The process of consent for the COVID-19 vaccine; and
- The importance of next of kin having access to rollout information.

The Advisory Group noted that further work is required to ensure that adequate vaccine information is provided to residential aged care facilities. Members agreed that to ensure people in residential aged care facilities take up the COVID-19 vaccination, they require greater access to vaccine information.

The Advisory Group considered the importance of high uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination and how to ensure everyone in Australia can access the vaccine.



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The department provided updates on critical pieces of work that are underway to support culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities during COVID-19. The Advisory Group heard about mental health initiatives that the Australian Government has in place. Members provided advice on particular areas of concern for culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities. The department gave members an update on progress towards the Australian Governments Primary Health Care 10-Year Plan and welcomed input on the next draft.

Dr Holly Seale, Associate Professor and program director from the University of New South Wales, presented to members. The Advisory Group discussed the findings of her study *Enhancing and supporting the COVID-19 vaccination program: focusing on culturally and linguistically diverse communities*.

The Advisory Group discussed further emerging areas of concern that need immediate consideration. This included:

- cost as a barrier to access interpreter and translation services for allied health
- the collection and use of data to improve policy and service delivery

The Advisory Group agreed to hold a separate focused discussion on how to best use data to inform response and vaccine rollout efforts across all communities, which would meet before the next Advisory Group meeting.

The Advisory Group will meet again in April 2021.

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