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

**Update: 23 April 2021**

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its fourth meeting on 23 April 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 an update on COVID-19 vaccination program. This included progress and changes announced at recent National Cabinet meetings on 19 and 22 April 2021. The announcement followed recommendations from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) on 8 April 2021. These recommendations were on the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for people under 50 years of age.

The Advisory Group discussed how Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines will be allocated in future. Advisory Group members emphasised and acknowledged the difficulties faced by people with disability and need for more support to access the vaccines.

The department gave an update on COVID-19 vaccine rollout across residential aged care facilities for residents and workforce. All aged care facility residents are scheduled for their first dose. Members discussed the importance of coordination at all levels, accurate data and the need for interpreters for culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse residents.

Ms Gulnara Abbasova, Executive Officer of the Harmony Alliance and head of strategy and policy at Migration Council Australia (MCA), presented to members. The Advisory Group discussed the findings of MCA's policy brief - *Integrating culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities in rapid responses to public health crises*. Members agreed the usefulness of the paper to inform policy development.

Work to improve the data used to plan health responses in culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities is underway. Attendees noted progress on linking the Australian Immunisation Register to the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project. This will improve reporting on vaccination across communities. Members noted recent updates to the COVID-19 vaccination consent form. The form now captures country of birth and language spoken at home. Members noted this as a step towards implementing better culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse data collection.



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The Advisory Group heard about the communication content distributed by the department across different channels. The department is exploring more content following feedback from recent consultations, such as more Coronavirus Hotline numbers to give advice over the phone in-language. The Advisory Group highlighted the importance of:

- succinct and appropriate information to support health professionals including bi-cultural workers;
- plain language for different literacy levels; and
- more coordination of messaging between Commonwealth and jurisdictions.

The Advisory Group will meet again in May 2021.

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