

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group

Update: 27 August 2021

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its eighth meeting on 27 August 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. More than 17.7 million vaccinations have been administered since the beginning of the rollout. From 30 August 2021, people aged between 16 and 39 years will be eligible for the Pfizer vaccine.

On 23 August 2021, the Government accepted updated advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) on the prioritisation for COVID-19 vaccines within the 12 to 15 years age group.

COVID-19 vaccination is [mandatory in residential aged care](#) from 17 September 2021. Residential aged care providers must report staff vaccination rates to the Commonwealth weekly. The Taskforce is helping workers to access vaccines in a range of ways including hosting a series of webinars for residential aged care workers. Members discussed the need for information about workers from multicultural backgrounds who are not yet vaccinated in order to support them to access vaccines.

The Taskforce gave an update on the [COVID-19 Mental Health Boost for NSW](#). The Taskforce is establishing pop-up Head to Health clinics in Western Sydney. The Taskforce, NSW Health and the PHNs in Western Sydney are working together to share information and ensure access to translations.

The Department of Health presented a draft concept for reporting vaccination coverage of people from multicultural backgrounds. The Data Working Group worked with the Taskforce and the Department to develop the methodology. The project uses data from the Australian Immunisation Register linked to data in the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project. Members

welcomed the concept and the Taskforce and Department will continue to work with them to refine it.

Professor Kirsten McCaffrey, Director, [Sydney Health Literacy Lab](#), University of Sydney, presented the results of the research project, 'COVID-19 Knowledge, Beliefs and Behaviours'.

The Taskforce gave an update on Digital and Service Design. The Eligibility Checker is available in 16 languages, including English. The Taskforce is investigating more options for multilingual phone support. Members discussed the booking process and interface with third party sites.

The Taskforce gave an update on the rollout for people with disability. The Taskforce is encouraging workers to book for vaccination wherever best suits them and is supporting workers with resources in multiple languages.

Migration Council Australia (MCA) provided an update on the communications and consultation activities it is leading. MCA continues to work with relevant sectors, including facilitating grassroots consultation sessions with settlement support providers and women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. MCA is also developing conversation guides for these sectors to build their capacity. MCA is co-designing and delivering multilingual communications, including a campaign with ethnic community radio stations, a social media campaign for young women, and animations and explainers about the vaccines.

Members discussed access to vaccines for people without Medicare and information about how to record this. The Taskforce is investigating options to support vulnerable populations and discussed the vaccination of people in immigration detention. Members discussed supporting people to connect with health practitioners who speak their language.

The Advisory Group will meet again in September 2021.

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