

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group

Update: 28 January 2022

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its thirteenth meeting on 28 January 2022. 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. There are now over 6,000 sites offering COVID-19 vaccines to children aged 5-11. On 20 January 2022, the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\) gave provisional approval for](#) the Nuvaxovid (Novavax) vaccine's use as a primary course for those aged 18 years and over.

On 24 December 2021, the [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\) recommended](#) reducing the five-month interval between the second dose and the booster dose, as soon as practical. A four month interval applied from 4 January 2022. A three-month interval will apply from 31 January 2022. On 24 January 2022, [ATAGI gave expanded guidance](#) on temporary medical exemptions for COVID-19 vaccines.

The Australian Government has committed over \$20 million to Primary Health Networks to continue to support access to vaccines for vulnerable people in 2022. This includes extending the Vulnerable Peoples Vaccination program, with a specific focus on non-Medicare eligible patients.

The Taskforce thanked members for their contributions to user research on experiences receiving or administering COVID-19 vaccines. The Taskforce updated the [COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#) on 17 January 2022 and is working on streamlining its translation process. The Taskforce is improving user experience of the [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder](#). The Taskforce has worked with Services Australia so that COVID-19 digital certificates can show up to six vaccinations. Members discussed increasing awareness and use of the [National Coronavirus Helpline](#) and Multilingual Priority Helpline.

The Taskforce gave an update on Rapid Antigen Testing. Supply of Rapid Antigen Tests is stabilising and there is a regular dispatch of tests to Aged Care facilities.

The Taskforce gave updates on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the disability and aged care sectors. The Taskforce has increased messaging about the COVID-19 vaccine in-reach program for people with a disability living in residential accommodation. From 4 January 2022, residential aged care providers must report on residents' booster doses and third doses for residents with severe immunocompromise.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) presented its recent COVID-19 vaccine community consultation and communication activities. To date, FECCA has awarded 241 small grants to multicultural community groups as part of the [CALD COVID-19 Health Small Grants Fund](#). FECCA has also worked with the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) to trial a community review panel model for translating public health materials.

The Department presented the latest data on vaccine coverage among CALD populations. The Department is working on improvements to the denominator used to measure this data. The Advisory Group discussed options for public reporting of the data.

The Department gave an update on COVID-19 vaccine communications. Materials in 32 languages on COVID-19 boosters and vaccines for children aged 5-11 are in market across multiple platforms. Translated resources are available in 63 languages to support people who test positive for COVID-19. Members discussed improving visibility of these resources. Members discussed need for clear instructions for people, including those with low digital literacy, about how to register positive self-test results.

The Taskforce thanked members for their time. The Advisory Group will meet again on 18 February 2022.

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