



Australian Government

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19

Communique Update: 5 August 2021

The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19](#) (Advisory Group) was formed in March 2020 to develop and deliver a National Management Plan to protect communities. The Advisory Group also advises on health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic response and the vaccine rollout. It is co-chaired by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), and the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce. This communique provides an update on their work and current key focus areas.

## **Pfizer vaccine rollout**

The Advisory Group welcomes the recent changes to Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine eligibility in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 12 – 15 years.

On 23 July the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) provided provisional approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 for 12 to 15-year-olds. The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has since reviewed available data on the safety and efficacy of the Pfizer vaccine in children aged 12-15 years, the risk of COVID-19 in this age group, and evidence of wider benefits and risks of vaccinating children.

Based on their review, ATAGI recommended Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 12-15 years as a priority group for vaccination. Accordingly, the Australian Government announced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 12–15 years are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine as part of phase 1B from 9 August 2021. Read the [ATAGI statement regarding vaccination of adolescents aged 12–15 years](#).

ATAGI and the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ) have jointly developed [Guidance on Myocarditis and Pericarditis after mRNA COVID-19 vaccines](#).

The Advisory Group continues to be a driving force in enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access COVID-19 vaccines through the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and primary care sector. These sectors continues to play a vital role in protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities from COVID-19. This has been highlighted in the following recent events and good news stories:

- On 27 July, Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation (NSW), Walhealth had a [busy first day](#) delivering the Pfizer vaccine to their community.
- On 28 July, New South Wales Health aired [#yarnupwednesdays](#), a Q&A session on COVID-19 vaccines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples featuring NITV host Shahni Wellington, Dr Jan Fizzell (NSW Health) and Dr Jason Agostino (NACCHO).

- On 29 July, Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (WA) celebrated administering an impressive [750](#) COVID-19 vaccine doses.
- Also on 29 July the Koorie Youth Council (VIC) hosted a [deadly live yarn](#) about the COVID-19 vaccines with a panel of Indigenous medical professionals addressing key questions about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine to encourage uptake in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- On 30 July the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (NT) shared an inspiring [video](#) featuring community member Shirleen getting her second dose of COVID-19 vaccine and encouraging young women and girls to get vaccinated.
- The Yulu-Burri-Ba Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health (QLD) has thanked the 40 people who [received a Pfizer vaccine](#) at their out-of-hours clinic at Capalaba on 31 July.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain a priority population for COVID-19 vaccination. People can check their eligibility, book a COVID-19 vaccination, contact their health clinic or find a vaccination site nearby through the [Clinic Finder](#).

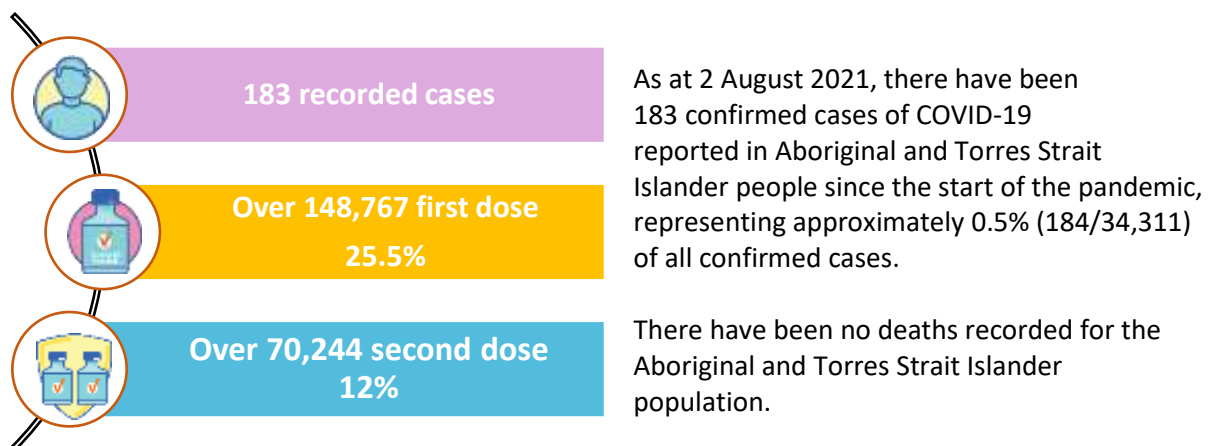
### **The Advisory Group welcomes the decisions announced following the recent National Cabinet meetings:**

National Cabinet met on 30 July 2021 to discuss Australia’s COVID-19 response, recent outbreaks of COVID-19 and the Australian COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

National Cabinet agreed in-principle to an updated four-step [National Plan](#) to transition Australia’s National COVID-19 Response (National Plan) taking into account the Doherty Institute’s COVID-19 modelling and the Australian Government’s Department of Treasury’s economic analysis. This Plan involves vaccinating 70% of the adult population before lockdowns and restrictions start being reduced.

The Advisory Group acknowledges the importance of ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remain a priority population in achieving this level of vaccine coverage, and that vaccination rates across all population groups need to be very high for the country to open up safely.

### **Current statistics**



With respect to the number of vaccinations, there have been over 148,767 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (about 25.5% of the of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged 16 years and over) and 70,244 (12%) have received second doses.

### **Resources**

The whole community plays an important role in stopping the spread of COVID-19. A range of resources are available on the Department of Health [website](#) to help you stay informed about the risks of COVID-19 and how to protect yourself and others.

The Department of Health provides regular electronic newsletter updates about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander response to COVID-19. [Subscribe](#) to directly receive these updates.