Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability   
Meeting 12 April 2022 – Summary of Outcomes

Committee members raised the following issues:

* low vaccination rates among National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants aged 12 to 15 years, and
* availability of data on:
  + vaccination rates for NDIS participants under 12 years, and
  + deaths among people with disability with COVID-19. There was particular interest in data on vaccination status, age, disability type, and vulnerabilities.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) presented on its development of [recommendations on winter booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine](https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-recommendations-on-a-winter-booster-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine#:~:text=Based%20on%20currently%20available%20evidence,increased%20risk%20of%20severe%20disease.). ATAGI also addressed:

* how long COVID-19 vaccination should be delayed following infection, and
* the use of the Novavax vaccine for booster doses.

The Committee requested ATAGI’s consideration of several factors in the development of its recommendations on COVID-19 vaccination. These included:

* risk COVID-19 poses to people with limited lung function
* high rates of comorbidities and early biological aging in people with disability
* evidence that people with intellectual disability are at greater risk from COVID-19
* avoidable deaths from respiratory illness among people with intellectual disability
* the diverse medical needs of many people with disability in the community, and
* risk structural disadvantage poses to people with disability.

The Department of Social Services portfolio provided an update on the COVID-19 disability response. This covered:

* research and insights on:
  + communication and engagement with people with disability
  + uptake of in-reach vaccination
  + data sharing between jurisdictions, and
  + vaccination consent and reasons for vaccine refusal among NDIS participants.
* the role of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission in disability service provider education and compliance relating to:
  + the provision of safe supports, and
  + assisting participants to access vaccination at a site of their choice.

NEXT STEPS

Two members of the Committee will attend the next meeting of ATAGI’s COVID-19 Working Group to present on the risks COVID-19 poses to people with disability.

The Department will investigate available data on deaths of people with disability with COVID-19.

The agenda for the Committee’s next meeting will include:

* strategies to improve vaccination rates among people with disability, and
* questions on the Department of Social Services portfolio’s presentation on the COVID-19 disability response.

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee is scheduled for 26 April 2022.