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## Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability Meeting 27 May 2022 – Summary of Outcomes

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Committee members with lived experience of disability and carers raised the following issues:

- increasing rates of influenza across the country
- difficulty accessing social supports while in isolation due to COVID-19
- hostility experienced by people who wear protective face masks
- lack of clarity on eligibility requirements and pathways to access COVID-19 oral treatments, and
- symptomatic individuals who are engaging in the community after testing negative via rapid antigen test (RAT).

A representative from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) COVID-19 Working Group updated the Advisory Committee on the expanded recommendations on winter COVID-19 booster doses. This booster is now recommended for more people at increased risk of severe illness.

In this updated advice, an extra winter booster is now also recommended for other people at increased risk. People can receive the winter dose four months after their first booster dose. This applies to people aged 16-64 who have a:

- medical condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness, or
- disability with significant or complex health needs or multiple comorbidities which increases risk of poor outcome from COVID-19.

The ATAGI representative acknowledged the advice provided by the Advisory Committee in expanding ATAGI's recommendations and thanked committee members for their input.

The Commonwealth provided updates on:

- the development of a statement for disability support providers on:
  - how disability support providers can discuss vaccine refusal with substitute decision-makers, and
  - the circumstances in which providers should apply to the relevant tribunal to seek consent for COVID-19 vaccination
- the consideration of testing and treatment pathways for COVID-19 and influenza for high-risk groups
- a resource for mental health service providers on speaking to clients with psychosocial disability about COVID-19 vaccination
- a co-designed communications campaign which aims to increase awareness the difficulties for some people as we shift to 'living with COVID'
- ongoing winter preparedness, including:
  - extension of funding of disability support worker vaccinations to 31 August 2022, and
  - extension of RAT distribution to supported independent living residences to 31 July 2022.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Commonwealth will:

- seek further advice on available social supports for people in isolation due to COVID-19
- follow up on work being undertaken to improve access to COVID-19 oral treatments
- circulate a factsheet on speaking to people with psychosocial disability about COVID-19 vaccination
- discuss with state and territory counterparts:
  - in-reach programs for influenza vaccination, and
  - people with disability accessing supports when isolating in hotel quarantine.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 7 June 2022.