
**Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)
for People with Disability
Meeting 13 September 2022 – Summary of Outcomes**

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

- disparities between COVID-19 vaccination rates for third and fourth doses between residents of disability accommodation and for residents of aged care facilities
- inconsistencies in vaccination rates for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants in the COVID-19 vaccine data published by the Department of Health and Aged Care (Department), and
- the safety and accessibility of the Moderna Spikevax Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine (bivalent vaccine).

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) [recently advised](#) that people aged 18 years or older can have the bivalent vaccine as an alternative vaccine for any booster dose. Trials show that the safety profile of this vaccine was similar to the first or second booster of the Moderna original vaccine.

The Victorian Department of Health presented on its Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) program:

- most DLOs were allied health professionals or nurses, and many had lived experience of disability or were carers
- DLOs supported people with disability to access COVID-19 testing and vaccination services and broader health services
- the program identified gaps in health service accessibility, and
- a community of practice facilitated information sharing and collaborative problem-solving.

The Department's Health and Economics Research Division provided an update covering:

- progress on:
 - the production of COVID-19 mortality and intensive care unit data for people with disability
 - sharing data on COVID-19 vaccination rates for people with disability with Primary Health Networks. The Vaccine Taskforce and the Department of Social Services portfolio lead this work
- availability of data on COVID-19 treatments prescribed to people with disability, and
- vaccine coverage for people with disability.

Committee members noted that data on access to antivirals may show gaps in access for people with disability. The Committee should be prepared to consider strategies to address those gaps.

The Department provided further updates on:

- progress addressing strategies and actions the Committee had recommended, to improve vaccination rates among people with disability
- how it is addressing the Committee's feedback on draft communications products, and
- insights from consumer sentiment surveys on COVID-19. Survey results indicate:
 - greater disengagement with public messaging on COVID-19
 - decreased confidence in the role of public health measures in preventing transmission of COVID-19, and
 - a reduction in COVID safe behaviours.

Members asked the Department to consider strategies to increase community awareness of the risks non-adherence to public health measures can pose to people with disability.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will:

- provide the Committee with information on the safety and availability of the bivalent vaccine
- consider whether it can share the slides presented by HERD with the Committee
- consider strategies to increase community awareness of the risks their behaviours can pose to people at greater risk from COVID-19, and
- investigate inconsistencies in COVID-19 vaccination data published by the Department.

The Commonwealth will provide an update on its progress implementing proposed strategies to improve vaccination rates for people with disability at the Committee's next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 11 October 2022.