



**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP**  
Prime Minister

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

Friday 9 April 2021

### **NATIONAL CABINET STATEMENT**

The National Cabinet met today to discuss Australia's COVID-19 response and the Australian COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

National Cabinet continues to work together to address issues and find solutions to the health and economic consequences of COVID-19.

The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, provided an update on the latest epidemiological data and medical advice in relation to COVID-19. There have been 29,390 confirmed cases in Australia and, sadly, 909 people have died. More than 16 million tests have been undertaken in Australia.

To date Australia's existing systems built around social distancing, testing, tracing, local health responses and quarantine have effectively mitigated the broader spread of COVID-19 virus and new variants of COVID-19 into the Australian community. COVID-19 vaccines will further strengthen Australia's ability to control the virus.

Australia has done well on both the health and economic fronts compared to most countries around the world. National Cabinet noted the significant increase in COVID-19 cases in many countries and the comparative strength of Australia's effort in addressing COVID compared to most other developed economies.

Globally there have been over 133 million cases and sadly over 2.9 million deaths, with around 816,000 new cases reported in the last 24 hours.

Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll out is expanding. To date 1,077,511 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Australians, including 81,297 in the last 24 hours.

National Cabinet received a detailed update from Professor Brendan Murphy, Chair of the Science and Industry Technical Advisory Group, and the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly on the Australian Vaccination and Treatment Strategy and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) advice on the use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. National Cabinet agreed to continue the Australian Vaccination Strategy for 1A and 1B priority populations. National Cabinet agreed that the new ATAGI advice will require a recalibration of the Australian Vaccination Strategy for future phases, with changes worked through in consultation with states, territories and medical experts over the coming weeks.

The Commonwealth Government has allocated over \$7 billion to support the COVID-19 vaccine strategy with contracts for over 170 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, through a diverse vaccine portfolio including the AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Novavax and through the COVAX facility.

National Cabinet welcomed the announcement of a two-way quarantine free travel arrangements with New Zealand. National Cabinet further reiterated support for the ongoing outbreaks in PNG and Timor Leste.

National Cabinet will meet again on Friday 7 May 2021.

### **Respect@Work**

National Cabinet considered the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's *Respect@Work* report, along with the Australian Government's response, *Roadmap for Respect: Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*. States and Territories have now agreed to provide a formal response to the *Respect@Work* report including recommendations specifically relevant to their jurisdiction by the end of June.

National Cabinet also considered the next phase of the \$150 million COVID family and domestic violence package. The Commonwealth provided \$130 million of this funding to States and Territories for frontline services to 30 June 2021. State and Territory Governments will now urgently provide updated reports on their acquittal of this spending, as well as future spending on these priorities and ongoing spending. This will assist the Commonwealth as it considers funding commitments and also ensure the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are all working together on this important issue.

National Cabinet noted that Women's Safety Ministers met this week and discussed the next *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, including a National Summit scheduled for 29 and 30 July. In July, National Cabinet will discuss women's economic security and consider all of the Commonwealth, State and Territory initiatives, programs and spending. As part of that discussion, National Cabinet will also consider establishing whether we embark on a National Plan process for women's economic security.

National Cabinet's work on women's safety and economic security recognises that all governments have responsibility for these important issues.

### **Update on Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) Advice on AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccines**

National Cabinet noted the advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) on the use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19.

The ATAGI advice is clear that the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective in preventing severe disease caused by COVID-19.

The medical advice to the Government is that the risk of blood clotting side effects from the AstraZeneca vaccine is around 5 in one million people, in the first four to 20 days post the vaccine. This is a rare but serious side effect.

The ATAGI advice is that the Pfizer vaccine is preferred for adults under the age of 50. The AstraZeneca vaccine should be given as a first dose to adults under the age of 50 where the benefit clearly outweighs the risk for that individual.

AstraZeneca is recommended for those over the age of 50.

National Cabinet agreed that the new ATAGI advice will require a recalibration of the Australian vaccination strategy, with changes worked through in consultation with states, territories and medical experts over the coming weeks.

The vaccination program for 1A and 1B Priority populations will continue, particularly for the most vulnerable Australians in Phase 1B including those over the age of 70 who are not impacted by this revised advice. Changes will be made to allow Australians under 50 years of age in priority populations 1A and 1B to receive the Pfizer vaccines reflecting the new ATAGI advice.

### **COVID-19 Data Releases**

National Cabinet agreed to release daily and weekly COVID-19 vaccination data. Detailed daily data will be released from today with weekly data released from next week.

Daily data will include a breakdown of doses delivered by the Commonwealth and by states and territories, and also by administration source.

Weekly data will also include:

- State, territory and Commonwealth weekly breakdowns of vaccines distributed, available and administered and dose utilisation
- State and territory weekly breakdowns of doses administered, as well as to aged care and disability residents and primary health care (GPs)

National Cabinet noted that the Commonwealth had previously provided states and territories with a 12-week forward plan and dose distribution under the revised vaccination program. National Cabinet agreed that the Commonwealth will now provide states and territories with a 10-week forward vaccine dose supply schedule, updated every four weeks.

### **COVID-19 Risk Analysis and Response**

National Cabinet received an update from the COVID-19 Risk Analysis and Response – led by the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Phil Gaetjens and comprising his State and Territory counterparts.

Based on this update, National Cabinet agreed to principles for reopening Australia, updated for the current risk environment.

The first principles prioritise the vaccine rollout. The rollout should occur as quickly as possible and take up be encouraged as a priority, with safety as a paramount objective. Progress on an effective vaccine rollout will be key to maintaining the easing of domestic restrictions, easing and opening international borders, and unlocking economic opportunities.

The second principle is to maintain readiness to ensure suppression. Even as the vaccine rollout accelerates, we will continue to minimise community transmission through our key lines of defence: high quality quarantine, contact tracing and testing.

These lines of defence are working well. Australia has received over 430,000 arrivals into quarantine since March 2020. Of these, over 3,000 have tested positive for COVID-19, with only 14 transmission events.

- The remaining principles echo the principles adopted in November:
  - Proportionate measures | Responses to new outbreaks are proportionate to the risk of harm and transmission.
  - Consistent approaches | Wherever possible, consistent approaches will be used, linked to transparent risk assessment to retain public confidence, while maintaining health protection and supporting economic recovery.
  - Protect national wellbeing | While protecting the community, decisions should minimise the impact on jobs, businesses, mental health and social isolation.
  - Effective and coordinated communications | We will continue to strive to provide clear and balanced communication of risks and responses to the pandemic.
  - Maintain and support confidence | Maintaining community, business and consumer confidence is key.
- The National Cabinet also made several specific decisions to take us further down the path of reopening Australia. Each of these decisions were based on AHPPC advice prepared for the Taskforce.
  - Density restrictions: easing venue restrictions to be no stricter than the 2 square metre rule.
  - Capacity restrictions: Large, ticketed and seated gatherings can have 100 percent capacity.
  - Outbreak responses: Jurisdictions will prioritise local containment measures and aim for outbreak responses that keep internal borders open.

National Cabinet tasked First Secretaries to work with AHPPC to provide advice on the implications for quarantine arrangements and reopening Australia following the successful vaccine rollout to the most vulnerable Australians (phase 1A and 1B).

### **Data Sharing**

National Cabinet agreed that jurisdictions will work together to capitalise on the value of public data to achieve better outcomes for Australians. In order to achieve this, First Ministers committed to develop an intergovernmental agreement which will be considered at a future National Cabinet meeting.

### **International Passenger Arrival Caps**

National Cabinet welcomed the recommencement of international passenger flights into Melbourne. Victoria is initially receiving 800 international arrivals per week, increasing to 1000 arrivals per week as soon as possible.

National Cabinet agreed that the existing arrangements on International Passenger Arrival Caps in other jurisdictions would remain in place until 17 June with the exception of Queensland.

Until 11:59pm on 13 April the cap in Queensland is set to a maximum of 650 international arrivals with a return to 1,000 arrivals combined with a surge capacity of 300 arrivals, as soon as possible.