



Australian Government



National plan for COVID-19 vaccination of workers in residential aged care

Information current as at 17 May 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government is making it as easy as possible for workers in residential aged care to get vaccinated quickly and safely.

Residents and staff of Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) are both prioritised under Phase 1a of the Government's COVID-19 Vaccine Program.

Aged care has a highly casualised, culturally and linguistically diverse, mobile workforce, with many aged care staff working across facilities. Most facilities operate three shifts each day.

In Phase 1a, residents are the Government's first priority for the aged care vaccine program, with staff following. Residents are receiving their vaccinations first because they are most at risk from severe illness or death from COVID-19.

The Department's current policy is to avoid immunising residents and staff at the same time:

- Post vaccination observations overseas – and in small numbers in Australia - indicate that some people will experience mild side effects leading to staff leaving work or not being able to attend the next day.
- The Department assesses that this places RACFs at risk of unacceptable staffing shortfalls.

There are currently two safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines available in Australia, AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines. Both vaccines are highly effective at preventing death and severe illness among people who contract COVID-19.

The Department's current policy is for aged care residents to receive the Pfizer vaccine.

Workers in residential aged care will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine depending on their age, in line with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommendations:

- **People aged 50 years and over** will receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.
- **People aged under 50 years** will receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

Current clinical advice is that there are unacceptable safety risks in a team at a residential aged care facility administering different vaccines at the same time.

For resident vaccine clinics, the current Excess Dose Policy allows some staff to be vaccinated with Pfizer if there are left over doses after all consenting residents have been immunised. A number of staff have already been vaccinated through this process.

DELIVERY MODEL

The Department has developed a flexible model to provide maximum choice and coverage for the aged care workforce to be vaccinated, and aligned with recent medical advice recommending Pfizer as the preferred COVID-19 vaccine for people aged under 50.

The delivery model for vaccinating workers in residential aged care include in-reach and off-site options.

In-reach:

- On-site vaccination clinics for workers operated by residential aged care facilities, using either Pfizer for workers under 50s and/or AstraZeneca for 50 and over.
- GPs delivering AstraZeneca vaccination clinics for workers aged 50 and over at the request of residential aged care facilities.

Off-site:

- State and territory vaccination clinics for all ages
- Commonwealth dedicated Pfizer clinics for residential aged care and disability workers only for under 50s
- 1B delivery mechanisms including Commonwealth vaccination clinics and local general practices for workers aged 50 and over.

1. GP options for aged care workers aged 50 and over

Available now: Aged care workers aged 50 years and over can access an AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination at a general practice, Commonwealth vaccination clinic, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service.

Workers can find a participating clinic through the [eligibility checker](#) on the Department of Health website.

2. State and territory vaccination clinics for residential aged care workers (Pfizer for workers aged under 50 and AstraZeneca for workers aged 50 and over)

State and Territory clinics are coming on line progressively: All aged care workers can visit state and territory COVID-19 vaccination clinics to receive the appropriate COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer for under 50s, AstraZeneca for 50s and over), in line with the recent recommendations by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

Arrangements for different states and territories clinics are happening progressively. Refer to the [eligibility checker](#) for available clinics in your state and territory. If you can't find details for nearby clinics please check regularly as the listings will be updated as clinics become available.

3. Dedicated ('pop-up') Pfizer vaccination clinics for workers aged under 50

Clinics commencing from 3 May: Residential aged care and disability workers under 50 years will be able to book an appointment at dedicated vaccination clinics offering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

These clinics are operated by Sonic Healthcare and are restricted to residential aged care and disability workers only.

The first Sonic HealthCare Pfizer clinics are in Greater Sydney, New South Wales:

- Blacktown – open from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week
- Campbelltown – open from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week
- Macquarie Park – open 12pm – 8pm Monday to Friday, and 9am – 1pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Bookings can be made for the above clinics via the [Sonic Healthcare vaccinations website](#) or call 1300 379 878.

Sydney-based residential aged care facilities are being contacted directly with booking information. A fourth clinic is currently scheduled to open from 31 May in Sydney CBD.

For other locations, when clinics become available, the Department will notify facilities and provide them with booking details to share with workers and the full details will be published on the health.gov.au website.

4. On-site vaccination clinics for all residential aged care workers

Available now for RACFs that wish to participate: Participating residential aged care facilities can choose to conduct their own on-site vaccination clinics with:

- the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for workers aged 50 years and over and/or
- the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for workers aged under 50 years.

Peak bodies and large providers have expressed interest in managing vaccination for their staff.

Many large providers currently manage their own flu vaccine program either through their own workforce engagement of third party providers.

This option is available under a Request for Tender process with the Department. The Request for Tender is available on [AusTender](#).

For successful applicants, a contract with all relevant obligations and requirements will be entered into, as well as work orders which will outline the vaccination sites, vaccine being used, population being vaccinated etc.

GP's can also conduct AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination clinics for aged care workers aged 50 years and over, at the request of residential aged care facilities.

Primary Health Networks will coordinate visits between GP's and residential aged care facilities if required.

5. Residential aged care facilities in Remote and Very Remote Communities

Underway: A range of providers are responsible for delivering vaccines to remote communities, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, GPs and GP-led Respiratory Clinics, State and Territory remote clinics and residential aged care facility vaccine teams.

State Chief Executive Officers and Chief Health Officers have agreed that while service providers should focus on defined priority groups, phased eligibility may be removed from the beginning of the 1b rollout on 22 March 2021 if:

- A community is in a MMM 7 area; or
- A community is in a MMM 6 area and has a population of less than 5,000 people.

Bilateral discussions are underway to determine the most effective localised planning approach for each jurisdiction with planning and rollout commencing as soon as practical.

Local residential aged care facilities will be notified if residents and staff will be vaccinated under this model.