

OPENING STATEMENT – 16 February 2022

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to make a brief opening statement.

I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respect to elders past and present.

I am pleased to report that the national vaccination program continues to make significant progress.

We have passed 52 million doses administered in Australia and I am pleased to report that Australians continue to come forward and take up their opportunity for a vaccination.

Australia is over 94 per cent fully vaccinated and as I have reported before, we have the 8th highest double dose vaccination rate in the OECD.

Our vaccination rates are higher than our closest neighbours, including New Zealand, and ahead of many other advanced economies, Italy, France and the United States to name a few.

The vaccination program for children and adolescents has also seen significant progress.

Over a million doses have been administered to children aged 5 to 11. This is a rate of 48.1 per cent. This is faster than the vaccination rates of the same group in countries like the United States, Germany and Israel.

The 12 to 15 year old vaccination rate is now 84.4 per cent first dose, and 78.2 per cent fully vaccinated.

Over 10 million Australians have already received their booster – which is nearly 60 per cent of the eligible population and over half of the total population, noting that around 4 million, or half of those yet to receive a booster, only became eligible this month.

Around 80 per cent of Australians over 70 have received a booster.

We are ahead of countries like Hungary, New Zealand, the United States and Japan.

I want to take this opportunity to ask all Australians to take up a booster to ensure you, your families and your community have the best protection from COVID-19.

There are more than 9 million booster doses in fridges across Australia and over 10,000 points of presence across the country where you can take up your vaccination.

Last week, we introduced a fourth vaccine to our program with the delivery of the Novavax vaccine and hundreds of thousands of doses are being shipped across the country this week.

There are appointments and walk-ins available every day and now is the time to ensure you are up to date with your vaccination.

Efforts to provide boosters to Residential Aged Care Facilities and shared disability accommodation sites have been our highest priorities.

All Residential Aged Care Facilities have now received an initial booster clinic.

We have concurrently commenced a second round of clinics, ensuring booster access for remaining residents. Around 450 sites have already received a second visit.

This has resulted in 86.1 per cent of eligible residents in Residential Aged Care Facilities having received a booster dose and 77.9 per cent of all residents.

All residential disability accommodation settings have been contacted to offer an in-reach booster clinic. 3,793 disability sites have been completed and over 900 sites are scheduled for a booster clinic shortly. 73.4 per cent of eligible residents have received a booster dose, well ahead of the national take-up rate.

Focus also needs to remain on completing primary course for Indigenous Australians. 82.7 per cent of Indigenous Australians have received a first dose and 77.4 per cent are fully vaccinated.

The gap in vaccination rate has closed by more than 12 percentage points during the implementation of our Accelerating Indigenous Vaccinations Plan, since September last year.

36,603 or 28.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 5 to 11 have taken up their opportunity for a vaccination too.

I urge parents to come forward and book an appointment for their children. Thank you to all the parents who have already ensured their children are protected with a vaccination.

I would like to once again say thank you to the GPs, pharmacists, Aboriginal health workers, nurses and vaccine providers, and all the distribution network staff and logistics support that continued to work over the holiday period to ensure our strong vaccination rates, and our strong protection against COVID was maintained.

The success in each of these areas has been a result of the partnerships that have been developed across the program, and I thank everyone who has worked with the vaccine program and will continue to work with us over the months ahead.

I continue to strongly encourage people to continue coming forward for their booster. There is more than enough supply, more than enough sites and bookings available for you to get your booster protection.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make this statement and I look forward to your questions.