

OPENING STATEMENT – 1 April 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.

The National COVID Vaccine Program continues to offer vaccinations to all Australians and support our efforts to respond to COVID-19.

I am pleased to report that we have met significant new milestones in recent months.

Australia is now over 95 per cent fully vaccinated and we have passed 56 million doses administered.

Since I last appeared before Senate Estimates, Australia has risen from the 8th highest fully vaccinated rate in the OECD to the 5th highest.

Australia's vaccination program is ahead of countries like New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France, Italy to name just a few.

As outlined in my Campaign Plan, my aim when I was appointed as Coordinator General of the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce was to ensure all Australians had access to a vaccination in 2021. The Campaign Plan also outlines that our aim was to reach national vaccination targets including 80 per cent fully vaccinated status.

I am pleased to report that Operation COVID Shield has met and exceeded these targets.

95.2 per cent of people are now fully vaccinated – this is 19,618,907 people in Australia aged 16 years and older.

The Campaign Plan also states that our mission is to deliver confidence in the vaccination program and regional support through the supply of vaccines.

Over 25 million vaccine doses have been shared with our South-East Asia and Pacific neighbours and I continue to work with DFAT on the delivery of more doses over the coming months.

Operation COVID Shield has also met the campaign targets of our sub-plans, particularly in relation to vulnerable and hard to reach cohorts.

90.9 per cent of aged care residents and over 98 per cent of aged care workers are fully vaccinated.

86.9 per cent of disability residents, 85.4 per cent of NDIS participants and 94.5 per cent of disability support workers are fully vaccinated.

80.1 per cent of Indigenous Australians are fully vaccinated.

80.1 per cent of 12 to 15 year olds are fully vaccinated.

We have met and exceed these targets through our three streams of effort.

We have coordinated vaccination efforts with states and territories, primary care sites and stakeholder groups.

We have delivered vaccinations to over 10,000 sites and with targeted interventions to increase vaccination rates in hard to reach communities.

We have motivated Australians to come forward and get their vaccination through general and specific communication campaigns.

Boosters remain a key priority and I am pleased that over 12.9 million Australians have come forward for their booster vaccination.

Over two-thirds of eligible people have had a booster, 68.0 per cent.

In vulnerable cohorts, we have seen very positive uptake.

86.1 per cent of eligible people over 60 have had their booster.

94 per cent of eligible Residential Aged Care Facility residents have had their booster.

The vaccination effort for 5 to 11 year olds is successfully providing protection from COVID-19 to children across the country.

Australia has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world with almost 1.2 million children, or 52.3 per cent, receiving a first dose and over 600,000 fully vaccinated, or 27.5 per cent.

We are ranked 5th in OECD countries – outlining how successful this program has been to date. But I acknowledge there is more work to do, in partnership with states and territories, to further increase this vaccination rate.

We have also been working with our partners to prepare for the delivery of a winter dose – for adults over 65, Indigenous Australians over 50 and residents of aged care and disability settings.

As a result of the infrastructure established under the vaccination program, with supply and vaccination sites readily available, we are well prepared to ensure all eligible people can access a winter dose easily and quickly.

4.7 million Australians will be eligible for this dose over the coming months.

Finally, I acknowledge that many Australians have been through difficult times over recent weeks with the extreme weather events in Queensland and New South Wales.

I want to thank my colleagues in Queensland and New South Wales Health for working with the Vaccine Taskforce to ensure deliveries are managed, sites are supported with stock and people can continue to get their vaccinations.

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