

Opening Statement – Lieutenant General Frewen

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 has made significant progress since I last appeared before Estimates.

87.4 per cent of Australians aged 16 years and older have now received a first dose of a vaccination and 74.8 per cent are fully vaccinated.

We have very high vaccination rates amongst older Australians as well.

98.7 per cent of Australians aged 70 years and older have now received a first dose of a vaccination and 88.8 per cent are fully vaccinated.

94.6 per cent of Australians aged 50 years and older have now received a first dose of a vaccination and 84.2 per cent are fully vaccinated.

We are also making great progress in the vaccination of younger Australians. Since children aged 12 to 15 years became eligible on 13 September, 65.1 per cent have received at least one dose.

However, we know there is more to do especially in the vaccination of vulnerable or hard to reach cohorts.

62.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have now received a first dose and 49.3 per cent are fully vaccinated.

We are working with all stakeholders to accelerate vaccination rates and pleasingly we are seeing some progress. The rate of new first doses for Indigenous Australians has been consistently higher than the non-Indigenous population over the past three weeks.

We are exploring every effort to increase rates – from communication campaigns, door to door vaccinations and hubs and other vaccine clinics.

Similarly, we are working closely with the disability sector to increase rates of vaccination. Over three quarters of NDIS participants 16 years and older have now received a first dose and over 63 per cent are fully vaccinated.

As we move through the National Campaign Plan and see higher rates of vaccination, we are focused on ensuring that the coordinate and motivate streams of effort are supporting our delivery.

Since the last estimates, I have released the following data sets on geographic vaccination rates:

- Every Monday, I release three sets of data on COVID vaccination by SA3, SA4 and local government area.
- I also release two data sets on Indigenous vaccination rates every Wednesday by SA4 and local government area.

These are available on the Operation COVID Shield page of the Department of Health Website, along with the daily rollout and jurisdictional slide decks.

In relation to our efforts to motivate Australians, we have

- Launched the Arm Yourself extension campaign, First Things First campaign, the More Reasons campaign, Community Pharmacy campaign and last week the Spread Freedom campaign and For All of Us project.
- Introduced tailored 'Crest' campaign materials into outbreak location.
- Undertaken an extension public relations program including vaccine information kiosks at 136 locations, providing information and booking services to over 22,000 people.

I want to acknowledge our vaccine delivery partners and the tremendous effort they have made in the success of the vaccination program.

There are now over 10,000 vaccination sites across the country, including more than 5,000 GPs, 3,400 community pharmacies and 169 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services that are delivering vaccinations across Australia.

Thank you to the doctors, pharmacists, nurses, Aboriginal health workers, receptionists, administrative staff and everyone else that has supported this work and I acknowledge that primary care has delivered over 55 per cent of doses under Operation COVID Shield.

Today, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has made a decision to approve the use of Pfizer as a booster dose.

Preparations are well underway to ensure a smooth incorporation of the booster program into our vaccination program and we expect to have ATAGI advice shortly.

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