

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO  
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Select Committee on COVID-19

**30 July 2021**

**QoN Number: CV19-463**

**Subject: Incoming Minister brief - vaccine rollout**

**Asked by:** Kristina Keneally

**Question:**

Senator KENEALLY: If I could please go to Home Affairs. Mr Pezzullo, in your incoming brief to the Minister for Home Affairs, Karen Andrews, you say, 'In light of Australia's vaccine rollout and the evolving international environment, the future of international air passenger arrival caps will be discussed at the 9 April 2021 national cabinet meeting.' What did you mean by 'in light of Australia's vaccine rollout'?

Mr Pezzullo: I would have to remind myself as to the context of that sentence within a larger paragraph, which I don't instantly recall. Ms Andrews was sworn—

Senator KENEALLY: You can take that on notice.

Mr Pezzullo: I am just trying to think of the time. She was sworn in on 30 March, so the incoming brief would have been in that first week in April. I will have to contextualise it in the context of the available information we had at the time and how we framed that in our advice to Ms Andrews.

Senator KENEALLY: You are correct; she was sworn in on 30 March. There were only 600,000 Australians fully vaccinated at that time, about 2.3 per cent of the population. Were you flagging a concern about the low vaccination rate?

Mr Pezzullo: No. I have a distinct memory of that because, if I had been concerned, I wouldn't have just mentioned it en passant in a sentence in a brief; I would have raised it more forthrightly in various fora.

Senator KENEALLY: I am just trying to understand what you mean by 'in light of the vaccination rollout'? Your assertion is you can't recall what you meant?

Mr Pezzullo: If you are asking many for a textual analysis of a document that has gone forward under my signature, I will look at the text.

Senator KENEALLY: But you can't recall what you might have meant by 'in light of Australia's vaccine rollout'?

Mr Pezzullo: Not in relation to that phrasing, no. I have got a recall of my own views of the matter and I am part of the team of secretaries that keep advice going forward to government. So that advice has been provided in fora other than incoming ministerial briefs. So what that fragment of a sentence, not even a full sentence, might have meant, I would need to contextualise in reading the text.

Senator KENEALLY: Why don't you do that on notice, Mr Pezzullo.

Mr Pezzullo: I will do.

***Answer:***

The full paragraph from 'Managing the return of Australians' Incoming Ministers Brief refers, 'The international air passenger arrivals caps are in place to enable quarantine levels to be managed in respective jurisdictions. In light of Australia's vaccine roll-out and the evolving international environment, the future of international air passenger arrival caps (currently in place until 30 April 2021) will be discussed at the 9 April 2021 National Cabinet meeting.'

Australia's vaccine roll-out is one of several key factors informing considerations on international air passenger arrival caps.