

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

20 April 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000079

State and territory breakdown of cohort 1A vaccination data

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 28-29

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: For all those areas where you say you think, you understand or 'in relation to the figures', you can sit here today and say you do not have definitive figures where I've asked questions and you've said you understand it's complete but you don't have the data or you think it's a small number but you don't have the data. In those situations where you and Professor Murphy have given evidence today, you are telling me that you do not have definitive numbers of vaccinations completed for those cohorts?

Dr Murphy: As Ms Edwards said, the states and territories have said they have completed their 1a, and we can get noticed the actual numbers from them and provide them to you. They have that information. They have shared—

CHAIR: Isn't this reported through national cabinet? Don't states and territories have to front up? What's happening there? Don't people come and say: 'This is where we're up to with our vaccination. This is how many we've done'?

Dr Murphy: Completing a cohort is a perfectly legitimate piece of data. We are very happy to provide the actual—

CHAIR: So you insert the word 'complete' into the dataset as opposed to the number.

Dr Murphy: The numbers are available from the states and territories. We are collating—

CHAIR: They're not available to us.

Dr Murphy: They are collating and cleaning that data, and we can certainly provide that 1a cohort on notice.

Answer:

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) identified priority groups for Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program. The priority groups identified by ATAGI included occupations with a high-risk of contracting COVID-19, rather than standard occupation groups.

The Australian Government estimated the number of people in each of the priority groups before the commencement of Phase 1a on 22 February 2021. These figures are included in Australia's COVID-19 vaccine national roll-out strategy published here: www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/01/covid-19-vaccination-australia-s-covid-19-vaccine-national-roll-out-strategy.pdf

The majority of quarantine, border and frontline health care workers in Phase 1a are employed by state and territory governments and some of these governments made their own estimates of group size early on in the roll-out. State and territory governments continue to advise the Australian Government that the exact number of people falling within scope of these groups fluctuates. The numbers change as people enter or leave the professions or new groups of workers are identified.

In part due to the imprecise and changing numbers of people in these groups, state and territory governments have worked directly with the agencies and local health services employing these people to ensure all eligible workers are identified and offered a COVID-19 vaccine.

Advice from state and territory governments on 30 April 2021 on their progress in vaccinating Phase 1a quarantine, border and frontline health care workers. Some governments indicated they considered first doses to these groups were "complete" noting new workers enter these professions regularly and will continue to receive priority access to COVID-19 vaccines. One jurisdiction reported they had vaccinated more workers under these groups than they initially estimated worked in the groups. Other jurisdictions reported they do not record (or mandate recording) a person's occupation at the time of vaccination and therefore do not have exact data on the number of first dose vaccinations administered to quarantine, border and frontline health care workers in their jurisdiction.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments continue to prioritise vaccinations for people eligible under Phase 1a.