



**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Tuesday, 21 September 2021
Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Response to Question Taken on Notice

- GOLDFELD, Professor Sharon, Theme Director, Population Health Theme, Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- STEER, Professor Andrew, Theme Director, Infection and Immunity Research Theme, Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Senator KENEALLY: I want to come back to one specific question. Forgive me if you said this earlier; I had trouble with my connection. **Do you have any data about the nature of infection in children from First Nations communities and their healthcare outcomes?** If you want to take it on notice, that's fine.

Response

The First Nations community in Australia have been prioritized for SARS-CoV-2 vaccination as they were identified as having a [higher risk](#) of developing serious illness from COVID-19, compared to other subgroups.

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) recognizes this subgroup to be an important focus for COVID-19 research, however the institute has not published any data on SARS-CoV-2 infection in First Nations children or their healthcare outcomes to date. Victorian data for this subgroup is limited as it is either unpublished, preliminary or lacking.

Several studies include First Nations children and adolescents, however they do not report on their outcomes specifically. For example, in a [MCRI study](#) of children who presented to hospital in Victoria with COVID-19, eight children were included who were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians (2% of the whole cohort). In this study, 12% of children were admitted, but only 4% of the entire cohort required medical intervention. This data does not describe the risk or outcomes for First Nations children specifically and should be interpreted with caution.

More research into First Nations children and their health outcomes following COVID-19 is needed before an accurate assessment can be made. Information from other states or research institutes may be available to answer this question.