

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

Written Question on Notice received 26 February 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000047

Estimations about phases or sub-groups likely to receive Pfizer vaccine beyond phase 1a

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

For those Australians most concerned about their virus vulnerability, are there any estimations that can be made about which phases or sub-groups are likely to receive the Pfizer vaccine beyond phase 1a?

Answer:

The COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia, Comirnaty (the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine) and the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, have both met the Therapeutic Goods Administration's high standards for safety, quality and effectiveness.

COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people of eligible age (≥ 16 years) for the Pfizer vaccine; to protect against COVID-19.

Due to earlier availability in Australia, the Pfizer vaccine was targeted to Phase 1a recipients through state and territory hubs and in-reach delivery to residential aged care facilities.

Subsequently, on 8 April 2021, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommended to the Australian Government that the Pfizer vaccine is preferred over the AstraZeneca vaccine in adults aged under 50 years. This recommendation is based on the increasing risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 in older adults (and hence a higher benefit from vaccination), and a potentially increased risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia following AstraZeneca vaccine in those aged under 50 years.

It is important to note the AstraZeneca vaccine remains highly effective at preventing death and severe illness among people who have contracted COVID-19, and that the incidence of the blood-clotting syndrome is very rare.

The Government has accepted ATAGI's recommendations, which has implications for the vaccine rollout. The Government will work through these implications with the states and territories as an urgent priority, including facilitating Pfizer vaccinations for priority cohorts.