

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

7 December 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000337

Doherty five-to-11 modelling

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 14

Senator: Perin Davey

Question:

Senator DAVEY: Professor Murphy might be the one to answer this. Do we have any modelling on the impact of vaccinating five-to-11-year-olds? We know what was a comfortable vaccination rate for the general population of 16 and over of 80 per cent. Have we actually modelled what the impact would be if, say, we get 10 per cent of five-to-11-year-olds vaccinated, 50 per cent or 80 per cent, and the efficacy of the program in stopping the spread of COVID?

Dr Murphy: I don't believe there has been broad population modelling. There has certainly been some in the Indigenous population that showed that it would be quite important. Dr de Toca could talk to that but I would have to take on notice whether the Doherty had done specific five-to-11 modelling. I don't know whether Dr Bennett is online. She might know. I will have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Doherty Institute was commissioned to undertake modelling to support the *National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response*. At the time initial modelling was undertaken, vaccination was approved in Australia for those 16 years and older, which was the main focus of the report. However, modelling also looked at the benefits of extending vaccine coverage in the population aged 12+ years, as was occurring in countries overseas. The modelling did not consider vaccinating the 5-11 year old cohort at the broad population level.

More recently, modelling was undertaken for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Due to demographic differences within these communities, with children under 12 years old comprising a larger proportion of the total population, vaccination of those aged 12 years and above was found to have less effect on reducing overall transmission and therefore cases of disease compared with the Australian population overall. Modelling indicated that further reductions in transmission may be achievable in remote Aboriginal communities by vaccinating the 5-11 year old cohort.

Full modelling reports can be accessed at: www.doherty.edu.au/our-work/institute-themes/viral-infectious-diseases/covid-19/covid-19-modelling/modelling.

The Australian Government has accepted recommendations from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation to make the COVID-19 Cominarty (Pfizer) vaccine available to all children aged 5 to 11 years. Rollout to this age group started on 10 January 2022.