

Subject: Updated vaccine arrangements [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Tuesday, 29 June 2021 at 7:13:58 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time
From: No-Reply.Vaccine
Attachments: image002.png, image003.jpg



Australian Government
Operation COVID Shield

Dear COVID-19 Vaccination Partner

We are writing to thank you for your continued support in Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program, and to inform you of new arrangements relating to vaccine options and indemnity provisions.

The medical advice on which vaccine to get – Pfizer or AstraZeneca – has not changed. The Pfizer vaccine remains the preferred vaccine for people under 60. However, under new arrangements, access to the AstraZeneca vaccine is being expanded to adults under 40 – provided they give informed consent.

This means people aged 18 to 39 – who are not otherwise eligible – can choose to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine after the appropriate individual risk-benefit analysis and consent process. Health providers should only vaccinate patients with AstraZeneca without a contraindication and if the person gives fully informed consent, noting they will be able to access Pfizer later in the year.

AstraZeneca is highly effective in protecting people against the serious health effects of COVID-19 – including death. It is locally produced and readily available in Australia. Currently we have adequate supplies of AstraZeneca to vaccinate all eligible people.

Making AstraZeneca available to a wider section of the population will give informed younger people the option to be vaccinated as Australia enters this next critical stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The eligibility checker will be updated to reflect these changes by tomorrow, and an updated guidance on weighing up the potential benefits against the risk of harm for COVID-19 for AstraZeneca can be found [here](#) to aid your conversations with patients.

Practitioners should continue to advise people on the preferred vaccine for their age – AstraZeneca for over 60s, and Pfizer for under 60s. The Australian Government is reviewing the MBS funding arrangements to support this work.

The Prime Minister also announced an indemnity scheme for practitioners who administer COVID-19 vaccines. The scheme will cover all approved COVID-19 vaccines administered by all privately practicing health practitioners administering doses on behalf of the Commonwealth. This includes the expanded availability of AstraZeneca to people aged 18 to 39, if they so choose.

The scheme will provide additional assistance to patients and health practitioners engaged in the vaccine rollout. It covers COVID-19 vaccines approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for use in the vaccine program and will give practitioners even greater confidence in their ability to provide advice to people seeking vaccination. The scheme's design includes a proposal to provide an administrative claims process which would avoid the need for patients to enter into litigation against a practitioner where there is clear evidence of a significant vaccine related injury.

The scheme will provide another layer of assurance to our vaccine administrators, and the Australian public, that the Government has full confidence in the rollout program and the vaccines being administered.

National COVID Vaccine Taskforce



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