



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday 2 July 2021

NATIONAL CABINET STATEMENT

The National Cabinet met today for the 45th time to discuss Australia's COVID-19 response, recent outbreaks of COVID-19 and the Australian COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

Since the beginning of the pandemic there have been 30,685 confirmed cases in Australia and, sadly, 910 people have died. Currently there are 4 cases in Australia requiring ICU hospitalisation and no cases on ventilators. More than 21 million tests have been undertaken in Australia.

Globally there have been over 182 million cases and sadly over 3.9 million deaths, with 429,948 new cases and 8,360 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge in many countries around the world.

Australia's COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues to expand. As of yesterday, 7,970,153 doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered in Australia, including 163,178 doses in the previous 24 hours. Today Australia will reach its 8 millionth COVID-19 vaccination. In the previous 7 days, 807,777 vaccines have been administered in Australia.

To date, 30 per cent of the Australian adult population have now had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, including over 50 per cent of over 50 year olds and over 70 per cent of over 70 year olds.

Chief Medical Officer Professor Paul Kelly provided an update on current outbreaks of COVID-19 in a number of locations and of both the Alpha and Delta variants.

Lieutenant General John Frewen, Coordinator General of Operation COVID Shield, provided a detailed briefing on the vaccination program.

National Cabinet agreed to meet next on 9 July 2021.

National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID Response

National Cabinet agreed to formulate a National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID Response from its current pre vaccination settings, focussing on continued suppression of community transmission, to post vaccination settings focussed on prevention of serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality, and the public health management of other infectious diseases.

National Cabinet agreed in-principle that the plan consists of the following phases, each triggered by the achievement of vaccination thresholds expressed as a percentage of the eligible population (16+), based on the scientific modelling currently being conducted for the COVID-19 Risk Analysis and Response Task Force.

The document is attached.

A. Current Phase - Vaccinate, prepare and pilot

Continue to suppress the virus for the purpose of minimising community transmission. Measures include:

- Implement the national vaccination plan to offer every Australian an opportunity to be vaccinated with the necessary doses of the relevant vaccine as soon as possible;
- Temporarily reduce commercial inbound passenger arrivals to all major ports by 50 per cent from current caps by 14 July to reduce the pressure on quarantine facilities, due to the increased risks of the Delta strain of the virus;
- Lockdowns to be used only as a last resort;
- Commonwealth to facilitate increased commercial flights to increase international repatriations to Darwin for quarantine at the National Resilience Facility at Howard Springs;
- Commonwealth to extend additional support through the International Freight Assistance Mechanism to ensure maintenance of essential freight supply lines impacted by the reduction of commercial caps at international airports;
- Trial and pilot the introduction of alternative quarantine options, including home quarantine for returning vaccinated travellers;
- Expand commercial trials for limited entry of student and economic visa holders;
- Recognise and adopt the existing digital Medicare Vaccination Certificate (automatically generated for every vaccination registered on AIR);
- Establish digital vaccination authentication at international borders;
- Prepare the vaccine booster programme; and
- Undertake a further review of the national hotel quarantine network.

B. Post Vaccination Phase

Seek to minimise serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality as a result of COVID-19. Measures may include:

- Ease restrictions on vaccinated residents - such as lockdowns and border controls;
- Lockdowns only in extreme circumstances to prevent escalating hospitalisation and fatality;
- Restore inbound passengers caps at previous levels for unvaccinated returning travellers and larger caps for vaccinated returning travellers;
- Allow capped entry of student and economic visa holders subject to quarantine arrangements and availability;
- Introduce new reduced quarantine arrangements for vaccinated residents; and
- Prepare/implement the vaccine booster programme (depending on timing).

C. Consolidation Phase

Manage COVID-19 consistent with public health management of other infectious diseases. Measures may include:

- No lockdowns;

- Continue vaccine booster programme;
- Exempt vaccinated residents from all domestic restrictions;
- Abolish caps on returning vaccinated travellers;
- Allow increased capped entry of student, economic, and humanitarian visa holders;
- Lift all restrictions on outbound travel for vaccinated persons; and
- Extend travel bubble for unrestricted travel to new candidate countries (Singapore, Pacific).

D. Final Phase

Manage COVID-19 consistent with public health management of other infectious diseases. Measures may include:

- Allow uncapped inbound arrivals for all vaccinated persons, without quarantine; and
- Allow uncapped arrivals of non-vaccinated travellers subject to pre-flight and on arrival testing.

National Cabinet agreed that the COVID-19 Risk Analysis and Response Task Force be tasked to make recommendations on finalising the plan, including recommended vaccination targets for each phase of the plan based on the modelling.

Phases will continue to maintain simple risk mitigation and prevention measures such as hygiene, tracing and testing.

National Partnership Agreement

National Cabinet welcomed the Commonwealth Government's \$752 million extension to the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response through to 30 June 2022. The National Partnership on COVID-19 Response provides Commonwealth funding to support state and territory efforts to address the pandemic, including the Hospital Services Payment, State Public Health Payment, Vaccine Schedule, Aged Care Schedule, and the Private Hospital Viability Guarantee.

Under the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response, the Commonwealth Government has provided to date an estimated \$5.765 billion to support states and territories to proactively manage the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the broader Commonwealth health response which totals more than \$27 billion.

International Passenger Arrivals

National Cabinet noted that international aviation remains critical to supporting the return of Australians from overseas as well as maintaining freight access (imports and exports) and Australia's long-term international connectivity. It was also noted that international passenger arrival caps introduced by National Cabinet have been essential to safely managing and aligning international passenger arrivals with available quarantine capacity.

The Commissioner of Australian Border Force Michael Outram APM presented information to National Cabinet on international passenger arrivals which was noted. Around 83.9 per cent of travellers to Australia during June 2021 are Australian permanent residents and their families.

National Cabinet agreed to temporarily reduce the current international passenger arrival caps by 50 per cent to manage the pressure on quarantine facilities due to the increased risks posed by the Delta strain of the virus. These arrangements will:

- commence by 12.01am Wednesday 14 July and remain in place until 31 August; and
- be subject to a review by National Cabinet before the end of August and on a regular basis throughout the remainder of 2021.

National Cabinet agreed that returning Australians will continue to be prioritised as part of these arrangements.

Given the impact of the reduction in current cap arrangements the Commonwealth will fund an:

- increased number of facilitated commercial (repatriation) flights, utilising capacity at the Centre for National Resilience at Howard Springs; and
- extension of additional support through the International Freight Assistance Mechanism to maintain essential freight supply lines.

[ENDS]

Media Contacts:

Prime Minister's Press Office, (02) 6277 7744

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Sydney

Press Office of the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, Canberra

National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response

National Cabinet agreed to formulate a national plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response from its current pre vaccination settings, focussing on continued suppression of community transmission, to post vaccination settings focussed on prevention of serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality, and the public health management of other infectious diseases

Phases triggered by the achievement of vaccination thresholds expressed as a percentage of the eligible population (16+), based on the scientific modelling conducted for the COVID-19 Risk Analysis and Response Task Force

A. Current Phase: Vaccinate, Prepare and Pilot

Continue to suppress the virus for the purpose of minimising community transmission

Measures may include:

- Implement the national vaccination plan to offer every Australian an opportunity to be vaccinated with the necessary doses of the relevant vaccine as soon as possible;
- Temporarily reduce commercial inbound passenger arrivals to all major ports by 50% from current caps by 14 July to reduce the pressure on quarantine facilities, due to the increased risks of the Delta strain of the virus;
- Lock downs to be used only as a last resort;
- Commonwealth to facilitate increased commercial flights to increase international repatriations to Darwin for quarantine at the National Resilience Facility at Howard Springs;
- Commonwealth to extend additional support through the International Freight Assistance Mechanism to ensure maintenance of essential freight supply lines impacted by the reduction of commercial caps at international airports;
- Trial and pilot the introduction of alternative quarantine options, including home quarantine for returning vaccinated travellers;
- Expand commercial trials for limited entry of student and economic visa holders
- Recognise and adopt the existing digital Medicare Vaccination Certificate (automatically generated for every vaccination registered on AIR);
- Establish digital vaccination authentication at international borders;
- Prepare vaccine booster programme; and
- Undertake a further review of the national hotel quarantine network.

B. Post Vaccination Phase

Seek to minimise serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality as a result of COVID-19

Measures may include:

- Ease restrictions on vaccinated residents - such as lock downs and border controls;
- Lock downs only in extreme circumstances to prevent escalating hospitalisation and fatality;
- Restore inbound passengers caps at previous levels for unvaccinated returning travellers and larger caps for vaccinated returning travellers;
- Allow capped entry of student and economic visa holders subject to quarantine arrangements and availability;
- Introduce new reduced quarantine arrangements for vaccinated residents; and
- Prepare/implement Vaccine booster programme (depending on timing).

C. Consolidation Phase

Manage COVID-19 consistent with public health management of other infectious disease

Measures may include:

- No lock downs;
- Continue vaccine booster programme;
- Exempt vaccinated residents from all domestic restrictions;
- Abolish caps on returning vaccinated travellers;
- Allow increased capped entry of student, economic, and humanitarian visa holders;
- Lift all restrictions on outbound travel for vaccinated persons; and
- Extend travel bubble for unrestricted travel to new candidate countries (Singapore, Pacific).

D. Final Phase

Manage COVID-19 consistent with public health management of other infectious diseases

Measures may include:

- Allow uncapped inbound arrivals for all vaccinated persons, without quarantine; and
- Allow uncapped arrivals of non-vaccinated travellers subject to preflight and on arrival testing.