



Australian Government



## Primary Care Vaccine Roll-out

# Phase 1b BULLETIN

1 April 2021

The first two weeks have been a steep learning curve for all involved in the primary care vaccine roll-out. The roll-out is a highly complex logistical operation, for storage and handling and delivery of temperature sensitive vaccines.

Although there has been some unforeseen issues in these early stages of the Phase 1b roll-out, including severe weather conditions, the Commonwealth is working closely with our delivery partners to deliver the AstraZeneca vaccines and consumables to vaccine sites as promptly as possible.

We thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding as such issues arise. It is expected that the logistical issues will be resolved in the coming weeks.

This Bulletin is intended to give you a point in time update of pressing topics as they arise.

## Key messages from Department of Health:

### Order Timing

We acknowledge the challenges experienced by some practices with the order windows across weeks 1-4. Going forward, **all weekly orders will be due by midnight Friday** every week, commencing from this week, for delivery by the following fortnight. See table below example of ordering and expected delivery window cycles.

Vaccinating Week	Orders Open	Orders Close	Expected Delivery Window
5 - Week of Monday, 19th April	Tues, 30th March	<b>Friday, 2nd April</b>	<i>13th - 16th April</i>
6 - Week of Monday, 26th April	Saturday, 3rd April	<b>Friday, 9th April</b>	<i>20th - 23rd April</i>
7 - Week of Monday, 3rd May	Saturday, 10th April	<b>Friday, 16th April</b>	<i>27th – 30th April</i>
8 - Week of Monday, 10th May	Saturday, 17th April	<b>Friday, 23rd April</b>	<i>4th - 7rd May</i>

This will be the ongoing cycle, **with orders due weekly**. Vaccine sites with an allocation of 50 per week should submit their orders every fortnight. You will receive an email notification informing you of the ordering window per week.

Orders that are not placed within the timeframe cannot be actioned retrospectively. If you do not place your order within the ordering window, you will not receive vaccine for the associated delivery week.

### Access to vaccines for under 18s:

The TGA has not approved the AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged under 18. As such, people under 18 should not be attending primary care vaccine provider sites even if they meet the broader Phase 1b eligibility.

The [Eligibility Checker](#) has been updated so anyone under 18 years is not prompted to book through the vaccine clinic finder.

**If individuals under the age of 18 present for vaccination they should not be given the AstraZeneca vaccine. If a person under 18 years of age is given an AstraZeneca vaccine in error, please report it to the TGA as a dosing error and notify the Vaccine Operations Centre on 1800 318 208**

Whilst Pfizer is approved for people aged 16 years and above, discussions are underway with the states and territories to understand if the Pfizer hubs can be accessed by people who are aged between 16 and 18 years and eligible in Phase 1b.

### ***Stock Acceptance and Management Forms:***

- All ordering and stock management for primary care vaccination sites should occur **through the online portal (CVAS)** at [www.health.gov.au/cvas](http://www.health.gov.au/cvas).
  - Stock Acceptance Forms should be completed **on the day** of delivery (as soon as possible).
  - Stock Management Forms should be completed by **9pm (local time) Friday** every week.
- If you have submitted your forms through a different format, or have yet to submit your forms, please log on to the portal and complete these.

### ***Receiving the vaccine, and the associated consultation, is FREE:***

The Australian Government is committed to providing COVID-19 vaccines free-of-charge for everyone in Australia. The vaccine and the associated consultation to assess for suitability to receive the vaccine is also free for both your existing **and** any new patients.

Patients may not be triaged or screened using other MBS items before receiving a vaccine suitability assessment service. Patients should also not be required to transfer their entire medical record in order to receive the vaccine.

**Charging a patient any costs associated with the administration of the COVID-19 vaccination (including consultation, booking or pre-screening) is a breach of the MBS requirements under the COVID-19 Vaccination Program.**

### ***Engagement with the Vaccine Operations Centre***

As we expand and bed down vaccine supply, the VOC is experiencing a large volume of calls and emails. We understand that some vaccine sites have been having difficulty getting the information they need via the Helpline and inbox. Wait periods have at times been lengthy and the call centre operators have not always been able to provide the information requested.

The Department is working hard to ensure call handlers have access to as much information as possible to assist with enquiries, and are increasing the number of call handlers to better manage the volume of enquiries and bring down wait times.

The call centre is there to provide assistance and your patience and respect when working with the call centre staff is appreciated.

### ***COVID-19 Vaccination Cards:***

We are working Services Australia to make these available to all vaccination providers. They will shortly be available for ordering at the same time as your vaccines.

In the meantime, we have organised for a bulk delivery to be sent to PHNs to distribute amongst all Phase 1b vaccine providers in the short term.

### **Priority Cohorts within the Disability Sector:**

All eligible people in both Phase 1a and 1b can access the vaccine within general practice settings if they have available appointments. Following anecdotal reports of eligible people from the disability sector having difficulty accessing appointments, further detail on who is eligible to attend Phase 1b vaccination sites is provided below:

- Those living with significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living – **including** Down Syndrome, muscular dystrophy, traumatic brain and spinal cord injury, severe intellectual disability.
- People with disability attending centre-based services such as:
  - day programs
  - respite care
  - supported employment.
- All workers providing in-home and community disability care, including centre-based care.
- Workers who regularly have face to face contact with those receiving aged care or those with a disability in phase 1a or 1b, including aged or disability care assessment workforce, those conducting regulatory activities and advocacy services.
- Carers (paid and unpaid) of:
  - a resident of an aged care facility or residential disability accommodation who is eligible under phase 1a
  - a person 70 years and over who is eligible under Phase 1b
  - a person with a specified underlying medical condition who is eligible under phase 1b
  - a child with a specified underlying medical condition who would be eligible in Phase 1b but cannot be vaccinated due to age restrictions.
- Disability and aged care support volunteers who provide support to people in their homes, respite care, educational, employment, leisure and/or residential settings, including those providing transport and advocacy services.

### **Further advice on the vaccine**

Vaccination sites are encouraged to have read the:

- [TGA's Product Information and Public Summary](#) for the AstraZeneca vaccine; and
- [Safety Data Sheet](#) for the AstraZeneca Vaccine.

These documents contain some shelf-life information and storage and handling requirements.

We have also received further instructions from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator about how to deal with spills of the AZ vaccine. In the event of a spill, vaccine sites should:

- Contain the spill to prevent further dispersal.
- Allow sufficient time (generally 30 mins) for the aerosols to settle/disperse before contaminated surfaces are disinfected.
- Wear appropriate PPE.
- Decontaminate the exposed area with an appropriate antiviral disinfectant effective against the GMO (adenoviruses). AZ recommends that an antiviral agent registered on the ARTG (suitable for adenoviruses) is used.

- Material contaminated with the GMO should be double bagged in biohazard bags and disposed of via high temperature incineration.
- Spills of 5 or more vials need to be reported to the VOC as soon as practicable (ideally within 24 hours)
- Spill kits are recommended to decontaminate any spills
- Otherwise deal with the spill in accordance with
  - The Product Information
  - the Australian code of good wholesaling practice for medicines in schedules 2, 3, 4 & 8 (NCCTG 2011) as relevant to the Contractor's activities, including to deal with spills
  - State and Territory legislative procedures for medical / clinical waste disposal.

#### ***Resources available on the website:***

The Departments '[Information for COVID-19 vaccination providers](#)' is a good source of information/detail. In particular:

- Consolidated information (previously provided in multiple FAQ documents) can be found in the two areas below and will continue to be updated. New updates include information on excess doses and vaccine pre-drawing.
  - **Advice for vaccine providers:** <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers/covid-19-vaccine-advice-for-vaccine-providers>
  - **Clinical Considerations:** <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers/covid-19-vaccine-clinical-considerations>
- Current advice from the **Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation** can be found at the link below. This includes new decision guides on COVID-19 vaccination of people with Immunocompromise and updated decision guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy.
  - <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers#clinical-guidance-and-information-for-covid19-vaccination-providers>
- The patient info sheet has been updated to be more printer-friendly: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-after-your-astrazeneca-vaccine> (including Easy Print)
- Resources to address common questions about the vaccines. If you have **noticed patient hesitancy** around COVID-19 vaccinations, you can direct patients to this page for accurate, evidence based answers about COVID-19 vaccines:
  - <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true>
- Updated product information on the AstraZeneca vaccine has been released. The changes are summarised in a table at the end of the document:
  - <http://www.guildlink.com.au/gc/ws/astra/pi.cfm?product=appc19vx10321>