

## COVID-19 VACCINE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION WEEKLY REPORT

<b>Week ending:</b>	05 February 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Routine
<b>Security classification:</b>	<b>In Confidence</b>	<b>Tracking number:</b>	2021-2232

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern <b>Prime Minister</b>	<b>Note</b> the contents of this Weekly Report	N/A
Hon Grant Robertson <b>Minister of Finance</b>		
Hon Dr Megan Woods <b>Minister of Research, Science and Innovation</b>		
Hon Chris Hipkins <b>Minister for COVID-19 Response</b>		
Hon Andrew Little <b>Minister of Health</b>		
Hon Nanaia Mahuta <b>Minister of Foreign Affairs</b>		



Dr Peter Crabtree  
**General Manager Science, Innovation and International**  
 Labour Science & Enterprise, MBIE  
 05/02/2021



Maree Roberts  
**Deputy Director-General, Systems Strategy and Policy**  
 05/02/2021

<b>Minister's comments:</b>
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**IN CONFIDENCE**

# COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Implementation

Weekly Report

Week Ending 05 February 2021

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RELEASED UNDER THE  
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

## Purpose

This weekly joint report updates Ministers on key developments in the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

## Workstreams

### Contract Management

Contact: Mike Stewart

MoH

On Friday 29 January, AstraZeneca applied for Medsafe regulatory approval. MoH contract managers have since met with AstraZeneca, MBIE's APA team were present to provide a formal handover. Later this week, MBIE will also be formally handing over the final vaccine supplier relationship, being Novavax, to MoH.

MoH have raised their first purchase order for a delivery of Pfizer vaccine, this delivery is scheduled to arrive in New Zealand the week beginning 15 February.

MoH have established a relationship with Belly Gully, who provided legal advice during MBIE's negotiations with the four vaccine suppliers, and commissioned them to provide ongoing legal advice to assist with legal issues and the need for legal support that may arise in relation to these APAs.

Lastly, MoH is working with suppliers to ensure they are appropriately informed with the indemnity statements expected to be tabled on or after 9 February 2021. AstraZeneca, Novavax and Pfizer's indemnity statements have been passed onto Treasury to be tabled, with MoH currently seeking confirmation from Janssen that they are happy for us to proceed with the tabling process.

#### *Vaccine evidence update*

Janssen and Novavax published initial effectiveness data for their candidates at the end of last week. The results were particularly promising for Novavax's candidate, with the data showing that it is as effective as Pfizer's vaccine for protecting against standard strains of COVID-19 (both 95%). Janssen was less effective (72% for standard strains), but has the advantage of only requiring a single dose. Janssen is currently conducting further trials to investigate whether a two dose regimen may deliver greater effectiveness.

Both candidates were notably less effective against the newer South African and United Kingdom strains of COVID-19. It is difficult to predict the extent of difference as these strains were less represented in the clinical data (Novavax's 60% effectiveness against the SA strain involves a confidence interval of between 20% - 80% effective).

Novavax and Janssen's weaker results against new strains of COVID-19 are not necessarily major causes for alarm, as COVID-19 vaccines may provide greater protection against severe illness than their effectiveness results imply (AstraZeneca and Novavax both note that they have recorded no cases of serious illness from COVID-19 post immunisation, although sample sizes were very limited).

## COVAX

Contact: Gleys Karran

Phone: 9(2)(a)

The European Commission announced on Friday the introduction of a new export regulation for COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the European Union (EU). The measure, in place until the end of March, stipulates that manufacturers can only export vaccines outside the EU once they have met their contractual obligations to supply the EU. Deliveries to developing countries, some EU neighbours, and those through COVAX are exempt. New Zealand, along with Australia, Canada and the UK are among countries potentially affected by this restriction. The measure sets a dangerous precedent for the control of vaccine exports manufactured in other jurisdictions and threatens to undermine global supply chains critical to the delivery of vaccines worldwide.

MFAT has expressed concern through our post in Brussels and to the EU Ambassador in Wellington, and the Prime Minister and Minister for COVID-19 Response have registered their concerns in public statements. The Minister for COVID-19 Response has written to his EU counterpart to reiterate our concerns. The Ministry of Health is in direct contact with Pfizer to ascertain whether these measures could impact on the timing of New Zealand doses to be delivered from Pfizer's manufacturing sites in Belgium. Advice at this stage from Pfizer is that they are still on track to deliver to New Zealand in February.

New Zealand is not among countries allocated access to the very limited first wave distribution of Pfizer doses to COVAX Facility participants. 18 participants were chosen, including 12 AMC-eligible participants. Advice has also been provided to Ministers on a purchase option to access a further 100,620 doses of the Pfizer vaccine (sufficient for 50,310 people) through the COVAX Facility. Gavi has also provided further detail on the delivery schedule for AstraZeneca, including to note that New Zealand could expect to receive between 6(b)(ii) doses in the first half of this year. We will receive our remaining contracted number of doses later in the year. The terms of the purchase will be finalised in direction negotiation between New Zealand and AstraZeneca, and officials are now awaiting direction from COVAX to begin these discussions.

The Minister for Pacific Peoples has met all six Polynesian Health Ministers (Cook Islands, Tokelau, Niue, Tuvalu, Tonga and Samoa) to outline New Zealand's offer to provide their countries with COVID-19 vaccines (sufficient to cover their entire populations) and end-to-end support for their vaccination campaigns. Ministers welcomed the offer, and officials are drafting follow up letters from the Minister to have this confirmed in writing to provide solid assurances of our support.

Officials are commencing work to ensure we can make decisions on and operationalise the donation of surplus doses both bilaterally in the Pacific, and possibly also through the COVAX Facility. The COVAX Facility is making significant progress on the development of principles and a process to support dose sharing through COVAX. Early decisions on the availability of doses for donation are important so that doses can be shared and used before they expire.

## Immunisation Strategy and Programme

Contact: Mathew Parr

Phone: 9(2)(a)

### *DHB Engagement*

We are continuing our close working relationship with DHBs as we progress closer towards vaccine rollout. DHBs have submitted their implementation plans and we are liaising with them on an individual basis to ensure they can deliver the vaccine in line with the Ministry's requirements.

Conversations and working sessions have been held within the past week that cover the following key areas:

- End to end process of vaccination, including detailed roles and responsibilities;
- Collateral to support the end to end process and key elements, such as COVID-19 tracer codes and operating procedures;
- Implementation and rollout plans; and
- Supporting with policy advice around their key focus areas.

### *IMAC Training Begins on 9 February*

The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) have confirmed that training material is being finalised and signed off during the week of 1 February 2021 by IMAC and the Ministry of Health. Training for vaccinators delivering the Pfizer vaccine will be available from 9 February 2021, brought forward from the original training go live date of 15 February 2021. The training required to deliver the Pfizer vaccine is two hours long, and delivered online, and IMAC have confirmed the capacity is in place to train all vaccinators required for the initial roll out of the Pfizer vaccine despite the expedited timeframes. This will include training on the COVID-19 Immunisation Register.

### *Communications & Engagement Strategy Refresh*

Officials have refreshed the communications and engagement strategy for the COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunisation Programme. The refresh has occurred in anticipation of the COVID-19 vaccine public campaign which is due to commence on 15 February. This was presented to Vaccine Ministers and also the Prime Minister, and is informed by research that has been commissioned by the Ministry. There are four principles that underpin the updated strategy:

- *Research and insight led* – we priorities and target those who need the most information.
- *Citizen and community centric* – we work with and empower communities so they feel a sense of co-ownership.
- *Partner wherever possible* – we make the most of existing networks and access that our partners (eg DHBs) already have.
- *Agile and adaptive* – we adapt our approach and respond as more information becomes available.

### *IIAG Membership*

After feedback from DHBs, the Programme has invited two additional members to the Immunisation Implementation Advisory Group (IIAG). This is to ensure we have equity of access within our advisory group and we obtain representation of the sectors who are most at risk during the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. The new members are:

- Rhonda Sherriff – Rhonda is a clinical advisor with the New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) and will be able to represent the aged care sector, particularly given their recent inclusion in Tier 2 of the Sequencing Framework
- Dr Tristram Ingham – Tristram is a senior researcher at the University of Otago and was involved with the Minsitry’s initial response to COVID-19 as a representative of the disability sector.

## Joint update from MBIE and MoH Communications

Contact: Stephanie Symynuk (MBIE)  
Carl Billington (MoH)

### *Campaign planning*

Planning for a public information campaign is well underway and is expected to launch in the coming weeks. MOH is working cross-agency as required.

### *Stakeholder engagement*

MoH held an engagement session this week, with communications advisors from a variety of agencies including Maritime New Zealand, Education New Zealand and Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ), to understand their communications needs as we near the launch of the immunisation programme rollout. MoH provided the above agencies with information and email templates to assist with communications to staff, following Medsafe’s decision to grant provisional approval of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine this week.

A factsheet/FAQ was developed for MIQ and Border workers.

Stakeholders that are frequently called upon to comment in the media were contacted this week after the Medsafe update to provide support for any questions that they may have.

### *Media*

MBIE continues to support MOH, working cross-agency to assist with press releases, media query responses and reactive Q&As for Ministers, as needed.

MBIE worked with MOH to draft reactive lines for your office after the Gamaleya/Sputnik V’s vaccine phase 3 trial results were published in the Lancet this week.

## Upcoming Briefings

Due Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
9 Feb	2021-2236	COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy - Additional Pfizer Purchase	Peter Crabtree