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**Transcript:** AMA Vice President, Dr Chris Moy, ABC News Radio, *Breakfast with Alison Crew*, Thursday, 7 January 2021

**Subject:** COVID-19 vaccine rollout

**ALISON CREW:** There are reports the Government is planning to place GPs at the forefront of its coronavirus vaccination campaign. It comes after the Government announced yesterday that it will bring forward the campaign by two weeks to the beginning of March. The rollout will be discussed by National Cabinet, which will meet tomorrow.

For more on this, we're joined by the Vice President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Chris Moy, who's also a GP in Adelaide. Good morning.

**CHRIS MOY:** Good morning, Ali.

**ALISON CREW:** Chris, have you actually been in touch with the Government about its vaccination strategy? What have you been hearing?

**CHRIS MOY:** Well, we have been involved, and I'm involved in part of the distribution planning. And certainly GPs have certainly been at the forefront of this, given our really good experience in terms of the mass vaccinations of influenza in a safe way, but also making sure that we do cross the T's and dot the I's in terms of making sure that it's given safely, and also that the recording and all the other things that need to be done with vaccination is done properly.

**ALISON CREW:** How fast are GPs are capable of rolling out these vaccination campaign then?

**CHRIS MOY:** Well, there's two parts to this. At the moment, we're firstly making sure we go through the normal approval processes for the vaccination. And that's probably until the end of January, which is being done by the TGA or the Therapeutic Goods Administration. We need to do that because we need to make sure that everybody out there is sure that they can trust the vaccine, that it's gone through the normal processes. So when your GP does come up and give you vaccination, that you can be sure that it's gone through the same approval processes and checks and balances as any other vaccinations you've had before.

After that, there are a lot of logistical issues, which are the things that are being planned at the moment. We're trying not to end up in a situation that's happened in the UK and also the US, where there's been a fair bit of chaos in the way they've done it, and there's been a lot of, let's put it this way, more haste and less speed, because you've heard in the US, for example, they're getting out only about 15 or 25 per cent of the vaccinations that they have at the moment.

It's the actual process of vaccination, of doing it, that's got to be the thing. There are a lot of practical issues, like making sure that we can overcome some of the storage and transport issues, particularly for the Pfizer vaccine which requires storage under minus 70 degrees. But also making sure that before we vaccinate everybody, we have normal processes of checks – including education of the community to make sure that they know what they're getting; that there's the pre-vaccination checklist; that there's a normal consent, because before we can give a vaccination, we have to go through a consent process; that there's recording of the vaccinations so that we can keep up with whether they're on their first or second vaccination. And that this can be done in a quick and COVID-safe way.

Now, all these things have to be planned so that when we get to the point of rolling this whole thing out and GPs are in a position to be able to do this in a consistent way, that the community can feel that we've gone through the proper regulatory processes, and that the process is safe and efficient.

**ALISON CREW:** Will anyone else be administering these vaccinations apart from GPs then?

**CHRIS MOY:** My understanding is that hospitals will be part of this as well, particularly for hospital staff. And also there may be other groups as well, such as Aboriginal health centres, for example, which will be very key in those communities as well.

What I'd say to people at the moment is that we've gone through this amazing process of actually developing several vaccines, which has been quite an amazing endeavour really and has shown the ingenuity and ability of science to get us to this point. But the next step is the more important thing.

Because it's not the vaccine which is going to save us. It's the safe and effective vaccination of the majority of the community which is going to allow us to move into a more normal life. And this has to be done properly, and that's why we're going through these steps at the moment, and we're not being forced to do so in sort of a half-assed way, really, which is kind of what's happening overseas by being in an emergency situation.

**ALISON CREW:** The Government also announced yesterday that it would bring forward the rollout of the vaccine by two weeks. What's your response to that, and will GPs be ready?

**CHRIS MOY:** Well, we'll have to see. There is still a moderate amount of time, and we're certainly seeing what's going on at the moment and what we are doing is actually learning a lot about what's happening overseas and the traps. There have been problems with wastage and confusion about how many doses to get out of a vial and things like that because of the rushed implementation in the United Kingdom and the US. So we'll be able to learn from that.

Look, there will be the odd niggling problem at the start, I'm sure. But a lot of time is being spent at the moment to try and make sure that we're prepared as possible so that when we do it, we'll overcome those more haste, less speed issues and it'll be a bit more like the tortoise and the hare. We'll be able to get ahead of this much more quickly because we'll do it in a better way.

**ALISON CREW:** And the National Cabinet is also meeting to discuss tomorrow the new virulent strains of the virus possibly spreading into Australia, coming from the UK and South Africa. How worried are you about these other variants?

**CHRIS MOY:** Well, I'm glad they are meeting because we need to start to think about it. This is not something we can get behind on. We are looking at a strain which does appear to spread more quickly and more easily. And unfortunately, purely because of the numbers, it's led to an overwhelming of the health system in the United Kingdom, and that's despite high levels of restrictions there already. So what we need to do is make sure that our first line of defence, which is quarantine, is really up to standard, because unfortunately this strain appears more likely to escape, for example, to quarantine staff, which is happening in Sydney.

And if it was to get out, it could spread more quickly and outrun and potentially overwhelm the contact tracing and the testing which has done so well in Sydney so far. Then we would have lost the battle. So we can't be in that position - we need to get ahead of this. And we're very glad that National Cabinet is sitting to think about this and put in particular measures. And that may be things like reducing the odds by testing people before they get on planes and things like that. They're the sort of things that may be helpful in reducing the odds of it getting through, because one case of this could really, really break down all that we've done so far.

**ALISON CREW:** Let's hope that doesn't happen. Dr Moy, thanks for joining us this morning.

**CHRIS MOY:** It's a pleasure.

**ALISON CREW:** Vice President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Chris Moy, who's also a GP in Adelaide, joining us there.

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