



CLARITY NEEDED ON COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT PROCESS
Joint statement – AMA and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

The influx of patients seeking to make bookings for COVID-19 vaccinations is encouraging, but the Government must urgently clarify the booking process for patients to help them better understand the process, Australia’s peak GP bodies said today.

General practices have been inundated with calls and online booking ahead of the beginning of the Phase 1b rollout of vaccines through GPs.

“Based on the volume of calls GPs have already received today, it’s good to see that the community is confident and wants to access a COVID-19 vaccination,” AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said.

“However, it’s clear the Government needs to make it easy for patients and General Practices alike to manage bookings for COVID-19 vaccinations and be clear about how long patients may have to wait before they can get an appointment.

“The rollout of the vaccine is a huge logistical challenge that is constrained by the available supply of vaccines.

“This means the rollout of the vaccine in general practice will start slowly and then build over time.

“Unlike the flu season, where 15 million doses are already stockpiled, this rollout relies on a weekly supply of COVID-19 vaccine doses that is capped.

“This means that general practices will have only a modest number of doses available for patients for now.

“GPs will be following strict priority criteria to ensure that vaccines are prioritised towards those who need it most.

“This is a time for patience for everyone involved.”

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) President, Dr Karen Price, said that general practice is the backbone of vaccination arrangements in Australia, but not enough had been done by the Government to communicate with patients about the rollout process.

“Next week, 1100 general practices across Australia will commence vaccinating patients against COVID-19, starting with priority patient populations,” Dr Price said.

“Over time, the supply of vaccines will increase, as will the number of places where a patient can access a vaccine.

“GPs have responded in large numbers to the Government’s call to help vaccinate the community, with around 4600 general practices to be progressively incorporated into the vaccine rollout over the next four weeks.

“However, it’s clear from the calls many general practices have received this morning that the Government needs to better communicate with the community on the vaccine rollout process, and not build unrealistic expectations, particularly at this early stage.

“Many practices will already be going through their patient records to identify who is eligible and will reach out to their usual patients to organise an appointment.

“While it may be frustrating for some patients that they can’t get an appointment now, more will become available as the rollout progresses.”

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