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Transcript: AMA Vice President, Dr Chris Moy, ABC News Radio, *Breakfast with Tom Oriti*, Monday, 22 March 2021

Subject: COVID vaccine rollout

TOM ORITI: Well, the Government's coronavirus vaccine rollout enters a new phase today - up to 14.8 million doses will be available for more than six million people who fall into the categories including Australians over the age of 70; more frontline workers; those with specific medical conditions as well. And it comes as the Therapeutic Goods Administration approved domestic production of the AstraZeneca vaccine late yesterday. But doctors have been sounding a bit of an alarm over delays to what's been called phase 1b, and joining me now live is the Vice President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Chris Moy. Dr Moy, thanks for joining us again on the show.

CHRIS MOY: Yeah. Good morning, Tom.

TOM ORITI: Are doctors ready for today's rollout? You know, we've been hearing a little bit about this online interface to book, some GP clinics being taken by surprise, a lot of uncertainty. What's the feeling?

CHRIS MOY: Look, I think last week there was just a little bit of a mismatch between the level of excitement, and just the messaging about what that was. Essentially, that was about the website which is called HealthDirect, which is not really a booking-in place, it's more of a health directory for people to find out whether they're eligible, information about the vaccine and, most importantly, where to find a place close to them where they can get the shots. And those places are going to come online in a staged fashion over the next four weeks.

So there was a bit of a mismatch there, but what I'm hearing on the ground is that GPs are really excited and ready to play their part in really protecting the Australian community, in the really big push on now that's about to happen. Because the numbers we're talking about now are going to make the current numbers that have been vaccinated pale into insignificance.

TOM ORITI: Yeah. I mean more than six million Australians become eligible for today. I mean, no doubt, it's a challenging task ahead. What are some of the issues that we might need to be aware of when we're trying to roll out that jab to so many people?

CHRIS MOY: Well, we just talk about the numbers, you know, when we're talking about 15 million shots, and the fact that, to some degree, everybody might initially feel as though they want to get it done straight away.

But what I would say is to everybody is that we've got a few months to do this, and just to understand it is going to be a staged thing. It's going to be more of a paced, orderly thing, and it won't happen in a day but it will happen. And behind the scenes, I know that it's a huge logistical exercise. I mean, one of the things that the AMA's been very keen on is for patients to ideally be vaccinated by their own general practitioner who they know and trust and knows their history.

TOM ORITI: Who they know, yeah.

CHRIS MOY: Yeah. And also that it spreads to as many points of vaccinations as possible across the country, so that it's spreads the load geographically, and means that if there's one place that's struggling a bit, the other places can take over. But, it also means that there's a logistical exercise of actually delivering this to everywhere on time, and I think that's already been shown to be a slight problem, even over the weekend with all the floods being a problem.

TOM ORITI: I was going to ask about that. I mean, one of the big stories we're covering on the show this morning involves this massive flooding in New South Wales over the past few days - it's set to continue. Are you hearing about any delays because of that?

CHRIS MOY: They already have done. And I know how people have been very upset about what happened, but it's been unavoidable. My understanding is somewhere in the order of about 100 and 150 places out of the 1100 places that were due to get their shots by late last week didn't get them by Friday. And a lot of people are really busting their guts behind the scenes to try to get them there. Some of them happened on Saturday, and the majority will get there today. The only problem will be, is some clinics have already got their COVID vaccine clinics set up today and they don't get there in time. So, that's the sort of thing that can happen. But look, with so many shots that we're talking about, these things aren't avoidable, and to some degree the floods were not foreseeable.

TOM ORITI: They weren't. Actually, one thing that's occurred to me though as well, because, you know, people are evacuating- thousands of people are evacuating, those orders are still in place. Do evacuees, who obviously have their mind on other things at the moment in terms of losing their possessions - and we're hearing about horrible stories - but do we need to keep coronavirus in mind in the background there? In terms of being as COVID-safe as possible when we're trying to move to higher ground and be safe in these centres?

CHRIS MOY: Ideally, yes, but obviously people will have other priorities. But we're in this fantastic position, and I know there's been a thing about the delays in the vaccine happening in Australia. There haven't really been delays, we've just done it in a calm fashion because we wanted to make sure that the vaccines went through the normal approval processes. But what we want to do is actually still be able to put out the vaccine over the next seven to eight months or so, without COVID being in our community.

TOM ORITI: Yeah.

CHRIS MOY: So, if we want to stop that happening, it makes it a lot easier to do it without COVID in the community.

TOM ORITI: Of course, when do you think we'll see - you mentioned seven or eight months a minute ago - when do you think we'll see most people vaccinated? I mean, what's a realistic expectation here?

CHRIS MOY: Look, I think the time frames that have been said are reasonable. I mean, October. I think the vast majority people who are eligible will have had at least the opportunity to be given it. I mean, I'm not so caught up in all the political discussion, I'm a bit of an on the ground doer, and I'm only interested in getting on with it. I've seen how big this is, and how much work has gone on in the in the background. To some degree, some of the stuff we heard last week is the sort of stuff we've heard in every country. But we've actually learned a few lessons from it, so hopefully we'll do a bit better as we get going.

TOM ORITI: Yeah. I guess we'll see how things pan out. Dr Moy, thank you very much for joining us again on ABC News Radio.

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