

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
Website: www.ama.com.au



INCREASED GP FUNDING FOR BOOSTER ROLLOUT WELCOMED BY AMA

The AMA today welcomed the Commonwealth Government’s decision to restore much-needed funding for the COVID-19 booster program.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the increased funding would support GPs and pharmacists to scale-up the number of booster doses being administered around the country.

“GPs and their practice staff around the country are under immense pressure and this extra funding is welcome recognition of the work they are doing and acknowledges the extra resourcing needed to support them,” Dr Khorshid said.

“This will enable GPs to reach out to patients, to run larger clinics and hold more vaccination sessions to meet demand. GPs have played an integral role in the COVID-19 vaccination program and will continue to work as hard as possible to get boosters into their patients’ arms.”

Dr Khorshid said National Cabinet had today also acknowledged the key role of the states and territories in the vaccine roll out and the need for the ramping up of their vaccination hubs over the coming weeks.

Dr Khorshid also called for the public release of health advice given to National Cabinet.

“National Cabinet has received advice from the Australian Health Protection Principals Committee recommending new social distancing measures, including mask wearing. This advice needs to be released publicly.

“The AMA believes it is critical the states and territories implement that advice, which is reported to include mandatory mask wearing. It is not good enough to rely on the notion of personal responsibility – we are in the middle of a pandemic, and it is critical all members of the community help control the spread of Omicron.”

Dr Khorshid said the AMA looks forward to more national consistency on testing regimes, a definition of ‘casual contact’ and the necessary public health measures to control the spread of Omicron around the country.

He said the AMA welcomed the continuation of reliance on the advice of the immunisation experts, ATAGI, by the States, Territories and Commonwealth.

“ATAGI’s advice needs to continue to guide the vaccine roll-out, including whether there is a need to prioritise targeted groups for boosters.

“While we are seeing some signs that Omicron may result in milder illness than earlier variants, it is far more transmissible and still poses a risk to people’s health and the health system. The AMA’s message to all Australians is to follow COVID safe practices, get a booster when its due, practice social distancing and wear a mask when you are indoors.”

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CONTACT: 02 6270 5478 media@ama.com.au

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