

## Strong vaccine messaging of vital value

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The scale and complexity of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout make it vital that Federal and state governments urgently step-up comprehensive communications to ensure the best possible outcome, the Consumers Health Forum says.

CHF has today released its [position statement on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout](#) which sets out the consumers' perspective on making the vaccination campaign work best for all Australians.

"The success of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign will depend significantly on effective communications that informs and reassures people about the need for and safety of the vaccine," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said today.

"Effective communications about the vaccination effort are more important than ever given the variation in vaccines and their outcomes around the world and the false and insidious attacks on vaccination being spread on social media.

"Our position paper makes clear that effective consumer and community engagement will be critical at all stages of the process. A successful rollout will only be achieved by building local vaccine acceptability and confidence and overcoming cultural, socioeconomic, and political barriers that lead to mistrust and hinder uptake of vaccines.

"With the first COVID-19 vaccines due to be available in Australia soon, the process must begin now to provide accessible and relevant information to the Australian community about which vaccines will be available, their levels of efficacy, how they can be accessed and what getting a vaccine will mean for consumers' day to day lives.

"Consumers must be meaningfully involved in the planning and development of communication materials to ensure they are respectful and minimise any potential for community division.

"CHF recognises that the vaccination rollout will be a complex task and it will be important that the Australian community understands and has trust in the process. .

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“Funding of \$23.9 million has been made available in Commonwealth’s 2020-21 MYEFO update to support an information campaign to explain the regulatory processes, the priority groups, timing and rollout to assist people in understanding how the vaccines work, and to be ready for when they can receive the vaccine.

“CHF supports the Australian Government’s commitment that the communication plan will include a national advertising campaign and communication specifically targeting priority groups, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Having the local community engaged and participating will be cost-effective, increases uptake of vaccines, and substantially reduces health-care resources needed to achieve high vaccination coverage.

“To implement a community-led approach, policy makers must accelerate dialogue and support the development of community networks, supporting existing local channels that influence decision making, such as community and faith leaders, teachers, sports and youth clubs, and online communities and networks.

“Many consumers will have valid questions about the safety and efficacy of the different vaccines and ensuring there is easy access to information to answer these questions is the best way to reduce vaccine hesitancy and instil confidence in the vaccine rollout.

“Informed consent needs to be obtained before the administration of a vaccine including information that enables consumers to understand the risks and benefits involved. The manner in which consent is obtained must consider the health literacy of diverse members of our community.

“Additionally, governments must ensure that there are transparent early warning and monitoring systems in place to ensure safety and provide assurance to the community about any adverse reactions and how they are being managed.

“Governments must ensure there is clear information about when and how people can get access to which vaccine and to ensure that those criteria are being applied consistently at a national level. Consumers should be consulted in a timely and appropriate fashion on the criteria that will be drawn upon to determine the prioritisation of access, as well as the decision-making on prioritisation.

“Vaccination services must provide the following:

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- A safe waiting area that allows for physical distancing
- A dedicated monitoring area staffed by appropriately qualified healthcare professionals to check for any adverse reactions
- An appropriate record-keeping system to track who has received the vaccine and how many doses
- A contact system for follow-up reminders to receive a second dose
- A commitment to provide the vaccine at no cost to consumers

“A community-wide effort to promote the right vaccination messages will benefit all Australians,” Ms Wells said.

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