



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Update on the COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy and Programme

Portfolios **COVID-19 Response / Health / Associate Health (Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall)**

On 7 December 2020, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that in August 2020, Cabinet invited a report back on progress towards developing a COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy, including a ‘prioritisation framework’ (now referred to as the Sequencing Framework) [CAB-20-MIN-0382];
- 2 **noted** that the paper under CAB-20-SUB-0509 should be read alongside the accompanying papers COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy: Update on Vaccine Purchasing [CAB-20-SUB-0508] and Support for Pacific and Global Vaccine Access and Roll-out [CAB-20-SUB-0504];
- 3 **agreed** that the government approach to COVID-19 immunisation is guided by the following principles:
 - 3.1 the COVID-19 vaccines we deliver will be free and safe;
 - 3.2 we will sequence the roll-out as COVID-19 vaccines become available;
 - 3.3 the sequencing of access must be needs based;
 - 3.4 we will continue to have strong border settings and roll-out strategy until we are confident that the New Zealand population is sufficiently protected;
- 4 **noted** that these guiding principles are consistent with the overarching Elimination Strategy principles of equity and wellbeing;
- 5 **agreed** that the purpose of the COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy is to support the “best use” of COVID-19 vaccines, while upholding and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and promoting equity;
- 6 **noted** that the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme would be the largest immunisation programme undertaken in New Zealand to date;
- 7 **noted** that work is well underway to enable the delivery of the COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy and Programme, informed by experience from other immunisation programmes;

COVID-19 Immunisation Programme

- 8 **noted** that the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme supports the implementation of the Strategy, and includes:
- 8.1 a plan for communications and engagement with key messages to encourage uptake and build confidence in the immunisation system;
 - 8.2 planning to distribute, manage inventory and schedule immunisation;
 - 8.3 developing the National Immunisations Solution to replace the National Immunisation Register;
 - 8.4 post-market monitoring to enable the Ministry of Health to adapt its approach as it learns more;
- 9 **noted** that the Ministry of Health will continue engagement fortnightly with the external Immunisation Implementation Advisory Group, which has strong Māori and Pacific representation, on the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme;
- 10 **agreed** that the Ministry of Health start to engage with other external stakeholder networks on the COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy and Programme before the end of 2020;
- 11 **noted** that the Ministry of Health is working to ensure that it can successfully implement the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme as soon as a COVID-19 vaccine has regulatory approval and is available for use in New Zealand;
- 12 **noted** that Medsafe has made arrangements that will enable the regulatory approval process to be as efficient as possible;

Sequencing and decision to use frameworks

- 13 **agreed** that officials develop a framework on the “decision to use” any approved vaccines available, as there will likely be a number of trade-offs to consider;
- 14 **noted** that, at least initially, immunisation may need to be sequenced if supply is limited, and that officials have developed a Sequencing Framework to inform this decision, attached in summary as Appendix Three of the submission under CAB-20-SUB-0509;
- 15 **agreed** that the purpose of the Sequencing Framework is to ensure the right people are vaccinated at the right time with the right vaccine while upholding and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations;
- 16 **agreed in principle** to the current Sequencing Framework, noting that it will be updated to reflect new and emerging evidence;
- 17 **invited** the Minister of Health to report back by the end of February 2021 on progress with the frameworks for deciding:
- 17.1 to use a COVID-19 vaccine; and
 - 17.2 how to sequence immunisation as vaccines become available;

Financial recommendations

- 18 **noted** that updated estimates indicate that the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme costs are now estimated at ^{s 9(2)(f)(iv), s 9(2)(i)} up to December 2021, of which \$66.3 million has already been drawn down from the Minimising the Health Impacts of COVID-19 – Tagged Operating Contingency;
- 19 **noted** that the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme costs have been prepared on the assumption that the COVID-19 vaccine product will be free for the New Zealand population;
- 20 **noted** that officials will provide additional advice in relation to eligibility for COVID-19 immunisation, the approach to any General Practitioner co-payment, and other related matters by the end of February 2021;
- 21 **noted** the accompanying paper “COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy: Update on vaccine purchasing” [CAB-20-SUB-0508] provides the full estimated fiscal implications across the COVID-19 Vaccine Purchasing and Immunisation Programmes and seeks agreement to the additional funding required.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet