

Opening remarks – Dr Krishan Thiru, Medical Director, Pfizer Developed Asia

I would first like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting and pay my respects to elders, past, present, and emerging, and to all of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Thank you for providing Pfizer Australia with the opportunity to appear at a public hearing of the Committee Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We would like to draw the Committee's attention to Pfizer Australia's written submission which identifies some of the key issues encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as broader issues that can improve Australia's long-term health security.

Pfizer has a proud history in Australia. We commenced operations here in 1956 with just six colleagues, and more than 60 years later, we now have more than 1,500 colleagues working at two commercial sites and three manufacturing facilities across the country.

Each and every one of these colleagues is incredibly proud that Pfizer has been able to develop a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine in record time. The announcement from the Prime Minister this week means the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is approved for use in Australia. Pfizer will soon be in a position to commence delivery of doses that will help protect frontline healthcare workers and some of the most vulnerable members of our community, and importantly, it means Australia can take significant strides forward in recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This announcement was made possible through unparalleled collaboration between companies, governments, regulators, public health bodies, and the academic and scientific communities, coming together urgently to find solutions to the pandemic.

Having secured this historic approval assessed by the independent regulator, the TGA, our focus in 2021 will be to deliver the vaccine to millions of Australians, in a highly coordinated effort with the Commonwealth, state and local governments, in line with Australia's COVID-19 vaccine national roll-out strategy.

Pfizer and BioNTech have ramped up our manufacturing capabilities across the globe and we have built a flexible "just-in-time" distribution system that can ship the frozen vials quickly to designated points of vaccination, minimising the need for long term storage.



We are working closely with governments around the world to ensure that our COVID-19 vaccine can get to the target populations that most urgently need it and these partnerships will remain essential. In Australia this is no different.

Pfizer has an agreement in place to deliver 10 million doses to the Australian Government over 2021 and we remain on track to deliver the first doses of this agreement in late-February. We will continue to work closely with the Government throughout this process and keep them informed at every step.

As Professor Brendan Murphy recently stated, the national vaccine roll-out will be the most complex logistical challenge Australia has ever embarked upon and we are determined to play our part in getting this right, but this will require collaboration, understanding and agility.

We will also need to address vaccine hesitancy across the community which means we are counting on you as senior leaders in our community to play a key role in increasing public confidence and trust in science.

We acknowledge the important work of this Committee in scrutinising each aspect of the pandemic response to ensure lessons are learnt, opportunities for reform are embraced and that we might be even better prepared in the future.

Areas for reform that Pfizer has flagged in our submission to this Inquiry include:

- expanding the community's access to funded vaccines and maximising the uptake of vaccines for which funded access is already established;
- a more appropriate valuation of high volume, low-cost medicines which are often critical lifesaving medicines used in the hospital setting;
- and for consideration to be given to replenishing and strengthening the reserves of medicines in the National Medical Stockpile to ensure it is fit for purpose and capable of responding to a future pandemic or biosecurity threat.

We are happy to provide further detail about the work that Pfizer and the sector more broadly has undertaken to respond to the threat of this global pandemic, and the science behind the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. However, as outlined in our written submission, due to competition law restrictions and the confidential nature of Pfizer's contractual agreement with the Commonwealth to supply our vaccine, we are not able to discuss specific details of the supply agreement.