

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Vaccine development

Senator: Patrick

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Question:

Senator PATRICK: ...Can you provide the committee with a broad description of each of the cases you're looking at—one where a vaccine is developed quickly, and clearly we've just talked about one where it might take a couple of years—just to give the committee some comfort and the public some comfort as to the sorts of scenarios you have at least some planning for?

Mr Duggan: Again, my engagement is largely around the economic side. But, as you rightly point out, that's a derivative of whatever happens in the future around the health side of the pandemic. The two are clearly integrated. But on the economic side, in terms of scenario planning, I think that's best directed to the Treasury department. I think they're probably better placed to help you in that regard.

Senator PATRICK: I understand that they're looking at different modelling for different circumstances, but this is broader than just Treasury; this includes health. Surely that's a PM&C kind of function. Maybe you'll end up passing the question on, but could I ask you—I would have thought it is more of an intergovernmental, across-government set of scenario planning.

Ms Foster: Those are issues that the secretaries board as a whole talks about, and we'll take that question on notice and see what we can provide for you.

Answer:

The Australian Government is regularly monitoring implementation and adjusting responses to the health challenges presented by COVID-19. Key plans include:

- Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus
- Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Disease Incidents of National Significance: National Arrangements for Coronavirus
- Pandemic Health Intelligence Plan; and
- 3-Step Framework for a COVIDSafe Australia.

The Australian Government is undertaking targeted action through the *Australia's COVID-19 Vaccine and Treatment Strategy* (the Strategy) to ensure Australians have access to a safe and effective vaccine if and when one becomes available. The Strategy will be updated iteratively as more information on the changing health, scientific, commercial and international landscape becomes available. The Australian Government is taking action across the following five work streams:

- research and development
- purchase and manufacturing
- international partnership
- regulation and safety
- immunisation administration and monitoring.

A free COVID-19 vaccine will be available progressively throughout 2021 in Australia, if promising trials prove successful, following a \$1.7 billion supply and production agreement between the Australian Government and pharmaceutical companies.

Under the agreement, the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca and the University of Queensland/CSL will provide more than 84.8 million vaccine doses for the Australian population, almost entirely manufactured in Melbourne, with early access to 3.8 million doses of the University of Oxford vaccine in January and February 2021.

By securing the production and supply agreements, Australians will be among the first in the world to receive a safe and effective vaccine, should it pass late stage testing. There are no guarantees that these vaccines will prove successful, however the agreements put Australia at the front of the queue, if the vaccines prove safe and effective.