

# **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE**

## **Department of Health**

### **Senate Select Committee on COVID-19**

#### **Inquiry into Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

#### **Written Question on Notice, 29 January 2021**

**PDR Number: IQ21-000025**

#### **Communication strategies for First Nations communities, CALD communities and disabled people**

#### **Written**

**Senator:** Rachel Siewert

#### **Question:**

How will the Government co-design communication strategies with people from First Nations communities, CALD communities and disabled people?

#### **Answer:**

The Department of Health takes an evidence based approach to developing communication strategies including research conducted amongst the relevant audiences and engagement with subject matter experts and community groups. Communication approaches and materials are tested and refined through research with the relevant target groups.

For example, the COVID-19 vaccine communication plans, developed to help ensure confidence in the rigour of Australia's approval process and to support vaccination decisions, will have strategies specific to the needs of priority groups. These include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disability.

#### **Advisory groups**

The Department of Health has been engaging regularly with the following advisory groups:

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19 (IQ21-000025 refers)
- The Advisory Committee for the COVID-19 Response for People with Disability
- The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group
  - A COVID-19 Communications Working Group has been established under this Group to support the development and distribution of COVID-19 information.

The Group provides insights and recommendations on communication with multicultural audiences.

- Roundtable discussions with community leaders are being conducted.

The Department provides the advisory groups with draft communication materials for comment and feedback. The Department will continue to work with each advisory group to further develop products in response to community needs.

Additional advice and consultation has occurred with the Department of Home Affairs and Services Australia's Community Liaison Officers who work directly with multicultural communities.

In partnership with the whole of government media buying agency, the Department of Health has developed community engagement strategies to reach culturally and linguistically diverse groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide coordinated and consistent messaging across all jurisdictions.

The National COVID-19 Vaccine campaign includes advertising translated in up to 32 languages across radio, press and social media along with translated content by SBS television. Campaign messaging will also be adapted into 15 spoken languages to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In addition, the department has collaborated with SBS on the SBS Multilingual Coronavirus Portal which covers over 60 languages. A new explainer video with information on COVID-19 vaccines is currently being developed. The Department also works with SBS on regular in-language radio ads.

An array of information products have been translated for CALD communities which include translations of essential COVID-19 factsheets (available in 63 languages) as well as other content specifically targeted for multicultural audiences.

The vaccine hub on the health website also has curated pages in 63 languages.

A suite of information resources are also being developed for Indigenous audiences. This will include newsletter articles and editorials, video scripts, social media content, and posters. The material will be provided to a broad range of stakeholders for sharing with their communities and networks.

The Department is also working with an Indigenous communication agency to create additional materials such as case study videos, advocate videos, animations, social media content and radio content. The Department will also create templates that can be adapted and used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to extend the reach of the communication activities.

A webpage has created with specific vaccine-related information and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

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**Written Question on Notice, 29 January 2021**

**PDR Number: IQ21-000035**

**During vaccine appointments, are practitioners able to charge a fee for consumables to patients if not provided by the government**

**Written**

**Senator:** Katy Gallagher

**Question:**

While the vaccine appointments will be bulk billed, PPE and consumables such as syringes, needles and alcohol will be provided by the federal government to practitioners on only a 'case-by-case' basis. Are practitioners able to charge a fee for these consumables to patients if not provided by the government?

**Answer:**

The Medicare Benefits Schedule fees for the attendance items for assessing administration of the COVID-19 vaccine are intended to fully reimburse medical practitioners providing vaccinations services under an Agreement with the Australian Government.

Under the provisions of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*, a medical practitioner providing a bulk-billed service to a patient undertakes to accept the relevant Medicare benefit as full payment for that service. Additional charges for the service cannot be raised. This includes, but is not limited to, any consumables that would reasonably be necessary to perform the service, including syringes, needles and alcohol.