

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to COVID-19 pandemic

29 September 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000686

Agencies and task groups preliminary reports/modelling results (COVID-19)

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 13

Senator: Rex Patrick

Question:

Senator PATRICK: Our response to COVID was rapid. We were talking before about hindsight being a wonderful thing. Just in terms of the committee understanding the work of those agencies or task groups to make sure we're rapidly responding, how do I get comfort? Is there documentation? Are there preliminary reports or modelling results that at least lay out the pathway forward, understanding what are the inputs, what are the likely scenarios? Is there something the department could provide the committee that gives us some—

Dr Murphy: We have a vaccine and treatment strategy, which is a public domain document, but I think you're looking for more detailed information. My intention would be, subject to the approval of government, to be as transparent as possible in our approach to vaccination. Once we've developed our prioritisation strategies and our vaccination plans, I would hope that we would be able to be transparent as we go. All we have in the public domain at the moment is our strategy, which we're working from—

Senator PATRICK: I'm interested in what you don't have in the public domain, and whether or not there's something you can provide to the committee that at least puts us in the right space so that we understand even what further questions we might ask.

Dr Murphy: Sure. Can I take that on notice and consider it?

Answer:

The Australian Government is working with scientists and other technical experts to support it to make decisions in relation to vaccines and vaccination.

The COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments for Australia – Science and Industry Technical Advisory Group provides advice to the Australian Government on the purchasing and manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. The advisory group, chaired by Dr Brendan Murphy provides advice on the safety and effectiveness of potential COVID-19

vaccines, tests and treatments, purchasing COVID-19 vaccines and treatments for Australia, the options available for manufacturing and packaging COVID-19 vaccines and treatments in Australia, distribution and logistics associated with potential COVID-19 vaccines, and other technical matters related to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has established a COVID-19 working group with three subgroups to provide analysis and advice in relation to vaccine utilisation and prioritisation; vaccine distribution and program implementation; and vaccine safety evaluation, monitoring and confidence.

While ATAGI and its working groups are considering a range of scenarios, they have not yet provided any formal advice to Government. Advice on priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination in Australia will be published once agreed.