

Media release

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Vaccine roll-out recalibration welcome as hospital and community pharmacy united in effort

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) commends the National Cabinet on the recalibration of Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out strategy announced today, which will see hospital pharmacists in crucial roles expanding state government vaccine hubs in strategic and high-impact locations.

The updated strategy will see the AstraZeneca vaccine offered to Australians aged 50 and over at state-run clinics and respiratory clinics from 3 May, and at GP clinics from 17 May, while Pfizer vaccines remain prioritised for Australians under 50 years of age in Phase 1a and 1b until supplies increase in the second half of the year.

Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the changes will see the full, complementary strengths of Australia's acute and primary health care sectors utilised symbiotically to increase vaccination rates.

'The COVID-19 vaccine roll-out is incredibly complex in scale and scope and we welcome the flexibility of government and health professionals in making these important changes in response to new safety data.'

'We reiterate our support for the Government's view that GP clinics remain the most vital COVID-19 vaccine access point for the wider Australian community, and support this week's proposal by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to bring forward the ability for community pharmacies in non-metropolitan areas with limited or no GP access to become vaccine hubs for these communities.'

'By expanding access across the board – from large metropolitan hubs to GP clinics – the recalibrated strategy will harness the responsiveness of pharmacists to the needs of the populations they serve, wherever they may live.'

Ms Michaels says hospital pharmacists continue to be instrumental in the establishment and operation of state-run vaccination clinics across the country, ensuring vaccine doses are appropriately handled and prepared according to strict protocols.

'We will continue to support our members as they work with their hospital colleagues to upscale this crucial arm of Australia's vaccine strategy, with some state-run clinics having the capacity to administer thousands of doses each day.'

'Equally important is the extensive reach of GP clinics and community pharmacies, and it is inspiring to see all pharmacists stepping up to the challenge with a singular focus on safe, robust herd immunity.'

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for leading pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working across Australia's health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. Embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams and equipped with exceptional medicines management expertise, SHPA members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

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