



Australian Government

VACCINE RESPONSE PLAN FOR THE PACIFIC

- Access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines is critical to help protect populations, enable economies to reopen and ensure stability.
- Australia is providing end-to-end support in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccines across the region.
- Australia has committed approximately \$200 million for the Pacific, as part of Australia's \$523.2 million, three-year Vaccine Access and Health Security Initiative for the Pacific and Southeast Asia.
- Australia will also provide \$100 million for a Quad Vaccine Partnership with the United States, Japan and India to increase COVID-19 vaccine supply and support effective delivery in the Indo-Pacific region.

1. AUSTRALIA'S SUPPORT

Australia is providing end-to-end support in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccines across the region. We are committed to supporting access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines for the Pacific, as part of our shared recovery from the pandemic. We will support Pacific partners to lead responses adapted to their respective country requirements.

Australia's support includes approximately \$200 million for the Pacific, as part of Australia's \$523.2 million, three-year Regional Vaccine Access and Health Security Initiative for the Pacific and Southeast Asia. This will help Pacific governments deliver broad COVID-19 vaccination coverage for their populations, through a holistic package of support encompassing vaccine procurement, technical assistance for policy, planning and implementation and advice on public messaging campaigns.

We will build on our long-standing bilateral programs in health and other key sectors and draw on partner expertise where necessary, including where geographically dispersed populations pose challenges to vaccine rollout.

We will work with key multilateral development partners to support the procurement of safe and effective vaccine doses that have met internationally accepted standards of safety and efficacy. This would enable more efficient purchasing and greater value for money, oversight of the targeting of funds and vaccine

regulatory requirements, as well as coordination of procurement and delivery.

Our Initiative will provide support for nine Pacific countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). We will continue to work closely with New Zealand, France and the United States to coordinate access to vaccines in New Zealand Realm countries, French territories and the US Compact States. This collaborative approach will help ensure comprehensive coverage for the whole Pacific region.

At the first Quad Leaders' Summit on 13 March 2021, the Prime Minister announced \$100 million for a Quad Vaccine Partnership. The partnership, to be guided by a Quad Vaccine Experts Group, will expand and coordinate the efforts of the US, Japan, India and Australia to increase COVID-19 vaccine supply and support effective delivery in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Initiative complements Australia's \$80 million contribution to the [Gavi COVAX Facility Advance Market Commitment](#) (AMC), which aims to provide sufficient doses to cover 20 per cent of eligible populations in 92 developing countries, including countries in our region.¹ Australia's advocacy to the Gavi Board has ensured that several Pacific island countries will now receive vaccines through the AMC. The COVAX Facility has supported country readiness, and the rollout of AMC procured vaccines commenced in the Pacific (Fiji) on 8 March 2021.

¹ COVAX AMC Eligible countries include: Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.



We are also investigating the provision of doses from Australia's supply pipeline across the region, subject to domestic requirements.

Our vaccine initiative is being delivered in the context of an estimated \$1.44 billion Official Development Assistance (ODA) flow to the Pacific in 2020-21, addressing health security, stability and economic recovery in the region. Australia's ongoing support for health system strengthening across the region critically supports our Pacific partners COVID-19 vaccine preparedness and distribution efforts.

2. HOW WE WILL DELIVER

Australia's vaccine access initiative will provide a holistic package of support – going beyond supporting vaccine procurement for the region. It will also support technical assistance such as training of health professionals to safely administer COVID-19 vaccines, logistics and coordination support, and investments in cold chain infrastructure to keep vaccines at the required temperature and transportation to ensure adequate staging points for vaccine rollout. Australia will also support Pacific partners to develop national immunisation policies and advise on messaging campaigns to ensure public confidence and uptake.

Australia is working closely with Pacific partners to jointly plan how we can best support countries to prepare and maximise the impact of vaccine rollouts. Post-rollout, vaccine surveillance will also be critical, including supporting Pacific partners to monitor for any adverse incidents.

We will support independent expert advice on COVID-19 vaccine introduction to inform national immunisation policy and planning. Through partnerships with WHO, UNICEF, the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) (TGA) and the [National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance](#) (NCIRS), Australia will support vaccine safety, including support for adverse events following immunisation, through strengthening guidelines, procedures and reporting systems, and developing risk communication and response strategies.

The core principle of equity will underpin all our efforts. We remain committed to advancing Australia's policy priorities on gender equality, disability and social inclusion across our vaccine support programs to ensure that no-one is left behind.

3. COORDINATION WITH LIKEMINDED GOVERNMENTS

Australia will support equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in the Pacific through multilateral and regional initiatives to finance, assess, deliver and monitor COVID-19 vaccines.

We will partner with key international organisations like WHO, UNICEF and the COVAX AMC to facilitate vaccine procurement and delivery across the Pacific. We will also engage with the Pacific's long-established regional bodies, including The Pacific Community (SPC), to leverage existing health architecture and coordinate the region's efforts.

Close collaboration with likeminded donors will ensure vaccine coverage across the whole of the Pacific. In particular, we will actively coordinate efforts with New Zealand, France and the United States. There is also increasing interest from other donors to play a role in vaccine access and delivery across the Pacific region as a whole.

4. COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION

Transmission rates vary across the countries in the Pacific region. As at 12 March 2021, there have been just over 1,977 cases of COVID-19 reported, with 23 related deaths in the nine Pacific countries included in the Initiative. Papua New Guinea has had the greatest proportion of cases, with actual figures likely higher than those reported. A number of countries under the Initiative are yet to report any cases (four out of nine to date), having moved quickly to institute preventative measures. However, until there is comprehensive vaccine coverage, all countries in the region remain vulnerable.

5. COVID-19 VACCINE PREPAREDNESS

Vaccination campaigns across the Pacific face risks and challenges, including those related to geographically dispersed populations.

Australia is working closely with relevant ministries across the Pacific on preparedness and planning. We remain committed to supporting Pacific partners with quality essential health services and health systems strengthening, and we will continue to support partner governments develop policies and plans for safe, effective vaccine rollout.