

## PHARMACISTS RESPOND TO THE COVID VACCINE CHALLENGE

Australia's pharmacists are responding to the Federal Government's call to assist in the COVID-19 vaccination program, with 1,000 pharmacists registering and more than 700 attending a Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) webinar session last night in preparation for their involvement in Phase 1 and 2 of the vaccination rollout.

The webinar - which included senior government officials leading the COVID-19 vaccination plan joining PSA President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman - provided information on the Commonwealth program, the role of pharmacists in Phase 1, the final call for Phase 2 Expressions of Interest to administer the vaccine through community pharmacy, and training and education to deliver the vaccine.

The PSA session had strong engagement from members seeking to learn more about the Commonwealth's rollout plans, which included information about training and state-by-state implementation, the pharmacists' role, how to register for the program, and common questions around requirements to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

A/Prof Freeman said the response from pharmacists to the webinar session had shown the high levels of interest and support for the COVID vaccine rollout.

"It is fantastic to see the level of support from our members - pharmacists will providing that support when vaccinations begin in March, and to deliver the AstraZeneca vaccine when the community pharmacy rollout commences in May," he said.

"Pharmacists are well placed to assist in this program and the attendance at last night's PSA webinar clearly demonstrates the commitment of our members and desire to ensure we understand the protocols and get the right training to deliver these vaccines safely."

The PSA webinar was hosted by A/Prof Freeman and included the Health Department's First Assistant Secretary Lisa Schofield, responsible for the whole-of-government taskforce on COVID-19 vaccine, and First Assistant Secretary Adriana Platona, responsible for the Community Pharmacy EOI call.

Clinical, logistical and separate State requirements were discussed and the pharmacists put forward more than 100 questions to the Health officials and PSA. All responses to the questions will be included in a COVID FAQ section on the PSA microsite - <https://www.psa.org.au/coronavirus/#COVID-18-vaccines>.

A/Prof Freeman noted that the South Australian Government yesterday joined with Queensland in approving pharmacists to administer the COVID-19 vaccine.

"This is all a part of the move to bring pharmacists into the rollout program – PSA and its members stand ready, willing and as last night's webinar showed, increasingly able to be a major part of this massive vaccination program to protect Australians," he added.

The webinar is available to view on the PSA website - <https://my.psa.org.au/s/training-plan/a110o0000AiOWE/webinar-recording-are-you-ready-for-the-covid19-vaccine-roll-out> - for members to access.

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