

COVID vaccination program needs the community to be patient and well-informed

MEDIA RELEASE MONDAY 22 MARCH 2021

The Consumers Health Forum welcomes the start of the 1b phase of the COVID vaccination roll out to older people and other vulnerable groups, urging the importance of the need for community patience and two-way communication between health authorities and consumers.

The success of Australia's response so far in keeping the spread of COVID to relatively low levels should not make us complacent about the priority of prompt vaccination of all Australians in the interests of our health and of the economy.

We also welcome the Therapeutic Goods Administration's approval of Australian manufactured Astra Zeneca vaccine which will substantially boost vaccination capacity.

It is vital that people get the facts about the vaccine and the rollout from authoritative and readily accessible sources, including government websites and their GPs who, from this week, will be scaling up vaccination availability.

"The early stages in Australia's vaccination rollout have made it more important than ever that the Government engages with the community, not only with up-to-date information on the vaccination program but also by listening and responding to communities about their experiences," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

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“The knowledge shared by community health leaders at CHF’s inaugural Australasian conference last week made clear the great value of supporting consumer involvement in the policies and administration in response to COVID.

“The conference heard there was still a lack of information among both consumers and some health providers about the implications of the vaccine for some vulnerable groups. On the positive side, there have been encouraging developments in getting the right information to the ‘unheard yet most vulnerable’ people such as in some migrant communities.

“A convincing example of just how effective community-based responses can be, has been the success in countering pandemic infections achieved by the member groups of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO).

“The 107 NACCHO groups achieved among the best results in preventing COVID compared to similar entities anywhere in the world and that was because of the strong community engagement and leadership,” Ms Wells said.

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