



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care

The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians



NACCHO
National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

14 September 2021

Boosting COVID-19 Vaccination Support for Indigenous Australians

The Australian Government is further boosting the vaccination program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across 30 priority areas to ensure all Australians can access a COVID-19 vaccine.

Since the start of the vaccination program the Government has been working closely with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), states and territories and other Indigenous organisations to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person has the opportunity to get vaccinated. Now with increased supplies and in response to current outbreak situations the Government is significantly boosting efforts to expedite vaccination uptake.

In partnership with NACCHO, states and territories, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and other Indigenous stakeholders, the Australian Government will immediately accelerate the vaccination program in 30 priority areas including:

- **Western Australia**– Greater Geraldton, Swan, Gosnells, Derby – West Kimberley, Port Hedland – South Hedland, Kalgoorlie – Boulder, Goldfields Esperance Region.
- **Queensland** – Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Fraser Coast, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Mareeba, Mission River, Moreton Bay, Normanton, Palm Island, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and Townsville
- **New South Wales**– Central Coast and Wollongong areas
- **Northern Territory** – Greater Darwin, North-East Arnhem Land and Barkly
- **South Australia**– Port Lincoln

Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt, said this builds on work done to date in partnership with NACCHO, the ACCHS, and the Royal Flying Doctors Service to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally safe and appropriate way.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been a priority for vaccination since the beginning stages of the national vaccination program, considerable effort has been taken to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are readily and widely available for communities,” Minister Hunt said.

“We are absolutely committed to seeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vaccination rates meet, if not exceed, the national target.”

Minister Wyatt said there has been significant work done to date to work with communities to tackle their individual needs and concerns, including countering vaccine hesitancy, in order to boost vaccination uptake.

“It’s my hope that every Indigenous Australian gets vaccinated - local Indigenous leaders across the country are playing a pivotal role in helping us achieve high vaccination rates, combat misinformation, and dispel vaccine myths,” Minister Wyatt said.

The boost to the rollout for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will build on the work already underway in Western New South Wales regions where Indigenous vaccination rates for first doses increased from 44.2 per cent to 67.8 per cent and for second doses from 26.1 per cent to 39.7 per cent over the past four weeks.

The Government will immediately provide an additional \$7.7 million to NACCHO to amplify efforts to reduce the vaccination gap by working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ACCHS and other organisations supporting the vaccination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will include:

- Additional vaccine liaison officers employed to work directly with remote and very remote communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in discrete communities in other areas.
- Boosting work alongside vaccine providers to support community engagement activities and providing culturally safe messaging, address vaccine hesitancy, facilitate informed consent and conduct health promotion activities.

This is in addition to \$19 million provided to NACCHO to date, to support the crucial role of ACCHS in the pandemic response.

Chief Executive of NACCHO, Pat Turner AM, said working with communities was critical to ensuring a successful vaccine rollout for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and welcomes the Australian Government’s ongoing partnership with NACCHO and our sector.

“The recent outbreaks have demonstrated the need to accelerate the vaccine rollout for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NACCHO continues to play a critical role in addressing hesitancy and ensuring timely and culturally appropriate information is provided to communities to encourage vaccinations,” Ms Turner said.

“This additional funding will further bolster our work in supporting all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access a vaccine by the end of this year.”

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has worked in partnership with First Nations communication companies to develop editorial, social and advertising to reach the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audience.

To further boost these efforts, the Government will also fund First Nations Media Australia, the national peak body for the First Nations media and communications industry, to produce

Authorised by Greg Hunt MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Somerville, Victoria.

and distribute a package of culturally appropriate public relations content to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about the vaccine rollout.

The partnership includes a range of activities that are planned to support the vaccine rollout, aiming to broaden the conversation around vaccinations, address misinformation and build positive sentiment and intention toward vaccination by using local and trusted voices and sharing positive stories.

The work will be undertaken by a number of local Indigenous media organisations across the country, with a particular emphasis on the areas that are included in the acceleration plan.

This builds on the Australian Government's National Vaccination Communications Campaign, which continues to deliver tailored communication to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences as a priority.

The Australian Government will continue to work with state and territory governments, NACCHO, ACCHS, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and other Indigenous stakeholders to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the opportunity to be vaccinated.

Data on the 30 priority areas will be updated weekly and will be available at [Health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au).

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