

COVID-19 VACCINE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION WEEKLY REPORT

Week ending:	20 November 2020	Priority:	Routine
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2021-1438

	Action sought	Deadline
Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern Prime Minister	Note the contents of this Weekly Report	N/A
Hon Grant Robertson Minister of Finance		
Hon Dr Megan Woods Minister of Research, Science and Innovation		
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister of COVID-19 Response		
Hon Nanaia Mahuta Minister of Foreign Affairs		
Hon Andrew Little Minister of Health		



Dr Peter Crabtree
General Manager Science, Innovation and International
 20 / 11 / 2020



Maree Roberts
Deputy Director-General, Systems Strategy and Policy
 20 / 11 / 2020

Minister's comments:



IN CONFIDENCE

COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Implementation

Weekly Report

Week Ending 20 November 2020

Purpose

This weekly joint report updates Ministers on key developments of the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

Workstreams

Advance Purchase Agreements

Contact: Poppy Haynes

Phone: 9(2)(a)

Progress this week

Joint Ministers approved the in-principle agreement to purchase up to five million doses of Janssen's viral vector vaccine this week. The non-binding term sheet, signed by the Director-General of Health, outlines the material issues to be included in the binding APA. Janssen have indicated they are keen to execute the definitive agreement before Christmas. Our ability to progress the definitive agreement will largely rely on the pace at which Janssen can turn around drafts, however we think a pre-Christmas timeline is achievable, as we have already negotiated a number of the substantive issues.

We are still progressing two further negotiations on top of the Pfizer and Janssen deals, and are on track to brief on these in the coming weeks. 9(2)(ba)(i) & (ii)

Indemnities

We have been working with Treasury on the tabling of the Pfizer indemnity. It is a requirement under the Public Finance Act that the Minister of Finance present a statement to the House once an indemnity has been granted. The statement just notes the fact of an indemnity being granted; the specific terms of the indemnity will remain confidential.

Immunisation Strategy and Programme (MOH)

Contact: Mathew Parr

Phone: 9(2)(a)

The Immunisation Strategy Cabinet Paper

A Cabinet Paper detailing the COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy is currently out for wider Ministerial consultation and the intention is to lodge it with Cabinet on 26 November. We incorporated feedback from Joint Ministers before wider consultation. The Immunisation Strategy Cabinet Paper provides Cabinet Ministers with an update on the estimated costs of the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme and shares the sequencing framework that will determine who has access to the vaccine first. It will be accompanied by a COVID-19 Vaccine Purchasing Cabinet Paper that details the components of the purchasing workstream. We have worked closely with the Vaccine Taskforce to ensure there is alignment between these two papers.

Workforce Strategy

We are progressing a workforce strategy to engage a workforce that is capable, in the right locations and ready to deliver a COVID-19 Immunisation Programme when a vaccine is available. We are considering options to expand the vaccinator workforce without affecting the broader health and disability workforce or other immunisation

programmes. The Ministry of Health Steering Group has agreed to an approach that engages non-practicing health professionals where possible to supplement the existing workforce, with clinical oversight and appropriate support from non-clinical staff. This can be progressed without a change to current regulation, which sets out the requisite skills for a vaccinator (including completion of vaccinator training, basic emergency techniques, knowledge of safe and effective handling of immunisation products and equipment, clinical interpersonal skills, knowledge of relevant diseases and ability to explain vaccination to patients).

Programme Assurance

We are implementing an independent programme assurance to ensure we are providing the strongest levels of programme assurance. We are engaging 'real time' assurance leads (Colin Macdonald and Stephen Crombie) who will provide oversight into the programme and report into the Governance Group on a fortnightly basis, who in turn will provide reassurance to Ministers.

COVAX

Contact: Glenys Karran

Phone: 9(2)(a)

Following Joint Ministers' endorsement, officials advised Gavi this week that New Zealand would not opt out of opportunities to purchase doses of the three candidates currently available through the COVAX Facility. This means that New Zealand will later receive options to purchase volumes of these vaccines, and officials will at that point put a decision to Ministers on whether to proceed with the purchase. We expect that the COVAX Facility will, in the near future, open opportunities to purchase additional candidates.

In response to a question raised at the first COVAX Shareholders Council meeting, officials also advised Gavi of New Zealand's preference to include small volumes of mRNA vaccines in the COVAX portfolio (in addition to the mRNA vaccine already included). This reflects our interest in the option to purchase additional mRNA vaccines, but also acknowledges that many other COVAX participants will not have the ultra-cold chain infrastructure in place to distribute mRNA vaccines.

Research, Science and Manufacturing

Contact: Justine Daw

Phone: 9(2)(a)

Budget 2021

We have provided Hon Dr Woods with an outline of emergent thinking on priorities for new Vote Research, Science and Innovation investment through Budget 2021 to serve as a basis for briefing the Ministers of Finance and Health. 13(d)

The cross-government Covid-19 Vaccine Taskforce has also recommended Ministers seek further funding for vaccine purchases and associated immunisation programme costs. Companion papers will seek approval for these calls on the contingency, with the additional amount sought significantly lower than initially expected by the Treasury to complete vaccine purchases.

Vaccine Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (VAANZ) Platform

VAANZ is seeking advice from its Independent Vaccine Advisory Group (which includes Taskforce Science and Technical Advisory Group member Professor David Murdoch) on two potential Covid-19 vaccine candidates for entry into VAANZ's preclinical vaccine evaluation platform. The evaluation process is a contracted activity, and we will take final decisions on suitable international candidates to the Taskforce in the next month.

These two vaccine candidates are in addition to VAANZ's original three candidates (two New Zealand-developed candidates, and one developed in partnership with Australian researchers).

Global funding for vaccine development – VAANZ candidate

The Malaghan Institute, the host of the VAANZ Platform, has submitted one of the two proposed candidates referenced above to be assessed for investment by CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Initiatives, a global partnership launched in 2017 to develop vaccines to stop future pandemics. The Call for Proposals aims to invest in a second wave of global vaccine development, with a focus on developing novel vaccine candidates against COVID-19 with scientific, technical or manufacturing differentiation from current COVID-19 vaccine candidates. Areas of focus are advanced development and technology platforms that could be used against other emerging infectious diseases.

Communications

Contact: Karl Ferguson

Communications planning

We are continuing to work closely with MoH and other agencies to plan for a series of upcoming APA announcements. We will continue to work with relevant Ministerial offices to shape how the announcement(s) will take place and will provide proactive Q&As and talking points.

Stakeholder engagement

We are following up on actions and next steps after last week's hui with COVID-19 Iwi Communications forum, working closely with MoH. We are also working closely with MoH on how we can effectively engage with Pacific People.

Following last week's meeting with the key "COVID-19 Commentators", the group agreed to a series of actions. These actions include plans to provide further information and consistent messaging about the Vaccine Strategy and Immunisation Programme, developing a way to easily share information amongst the group, and exploring further public-facing communications that make use of video and/or animation.

Peter Crabtree, Helen Petousis-Harris, Casey Pickett (MoH) and Mathew Parr (MoH) provided a briefing to a Ministry-of-Education-convened COVID-19 sector forum. In addition to a progress briefing on the Vaccine Strategy, we sought feedback from the sector about their likely needs and expectations in relation to vaccines going forward.

Media management

We worked closely with communications and government relations contacts at Janssen, ahead of the announcement this week. We supported Ministers and Director-General of MoH with reactive Q&As and talking points. The news was well-received with significant media coverage on Thursday morning.

We proactively contacted the key "COVID-19 Commentators" ahead of the Janssen announcement this week, to support them with any media queries they received from the Janssen announcement.

Upcoming Briefings

Due Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
23 Nov	TBC	Further Covid-19 Vaccine purchase recommendations	Poppy Haynes
TBC (Nov 2020)		Business Case for Domestically Manufacturing COVID-19 Vaccines	Simon Rae

Cabinet Paper

Due Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
TBC (Nov 2020)		COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy – Nov 2020 Progress Report	Peter Crabtree
TBC (Nov 2020)		COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy – November 2020 progress report	MOH

Ministerial Official Information Act Requests

Number	Due to MO	Due to Requestor	Requestor	Request	Status	Sign out
OIA 2021-0890	17 Nov	24 Nov	9(2)(a)	NZ's approach to purchasing vaccines developed using "unethical" cell lines	Sent to MO	Poppy Haynes
OIA20-131	4 Dec	11 Dec	9(2)(a)	Copies of any briefings the Minister has received from Government Departments (except for Briefings to Incoming Ministers, which I understand are being proactively released) between 6 November 2020 and 13 November 2020 under the Official Information Act.	Scoping	Poppy Haynes