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COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy: Key Messages and Q&As

Key messages

COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy

- Four agreements have been signed for COVID-19 vaccines:
  - **University of Oxford/AstraZeneca:** 7.6 million doses (enough for 3.8 million people)
  - **Novavax:** 10.72 million doses (enough for 5.36 million people)
  - **Pfizer/BioNTech:** 1.5 million doses (enough for 750,000 people)
  - **Janssen:** up to 5 million doses (enough for 5 million people)
- We've secured access to four vaccines across three different technology platforms to ensure we have diversity across the types of vaccines available.
- Our purchasing strategy means we are not putting all of our eggs in one basket. We are addressing the potential risk that some vaccines may turn out to be unsuitable for use in New Zealand.
- If proven to be safe and effective by New Zealand's pharmaceuticals regulator Medsafe, they will provide broad population coverage for New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours.

We have a comprehensive plan to access safe and effective vaccines for New Zealanders.

- The Government's COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy ensures that we are pursuing a number of different avenues to access suitable vaccines as soon as possible.
  - A key aim of the approach is to ensure we have flexibility and choice when it comes to securing the right vaccines for New Zealand and that we support our Pacific neighbours.
- We've made good progress. We've:
  - joined the global COVAX Facility
  - negotiated a series of independent purchasing agreements with pharmaceutical companies, with four concluded
  - invested in our local manufacturing capability and
  - supported Vaccine Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand, to establish a national development and screening programme for potential COVID-19 vaccines.

We will ensure that any COVID-19 vaccines provided to the community will be safe.

- We can be certain that any vaccine we distribute to the community will be approved by Medsafe, to ensure it meets strict health and safety requirements.
- The COVID-19 vaccines we get access to may not be suitable for everyone at first.
  - As trials progress, we will be able to better understand how the vaccine candidates perform with different segments of the population, such as tamariki (young children) and pāhake (older people).

There is still uncertainty about when vaccines will be available.

- The exact timing about when a vaccine will be available to New Zealanders is uncertain, but as things currently stand, we expect to start vaccinating frontline workers in the second quarter of 2021, and the general Public in the second half of the year.

- Our plan ensures that we are investing in a portfolio of vaccine candidates, so that we can access sufficient quantities if and when vaccines have successfully completed trials.

It's likely that access to the earliest COVID-19 vaccines will be for those who need it most.

- A critical element of the world's response to COVID-19 will be a globally available vaccine that protects the world's population from the disease and helps to restore healthy economies.
- We aim to secure a sufficient amount of vaccine for all New Zealanders and will support access for our Pacific neighbours, too.
- Vaccines won't necessarily be available to everyone all at once.
  - This is not just a New Zealand problem. The volume at which vaccines can be manufactured and then the availability of global shipping and distribution processes will influence the timing and availability of vaccines for all countries.
  - The Ministry of Health is developing an immunisation plan to ensure that the appropriate vaccines are made available to people at the right time. The approach will consider factors such as those at higher risk of exposure (such as front line health workers), differing health needs and vulnerabilities to any known side effects.

Recent Q&As	
Why didn't NZ purchase more effective vaccines, like the Sputnik vaccine?	We've secured access to four vaccines across three different technology platforms to ensure we have diversity across the types of vaccines available. This portfolio approach was undertaken to maximise the chance of securing sufficient supplies of effective vaccines. The decisions to purchase the vaccines in our portfolio were made through a process guided by independent scientific advisers and experts across agencies. This process considered multiple factors including effectiveness to determining which vaccines are best for New Zealand. Decisions to purchase particular vaccines have been made by Ministers drawing upon advice from both officials and independent technical and scientific advisers, and have been assessed against a framework which considers factors including ensuring that our portfolio is not overly reliant on one vaccine technology, timing of delivery, cost, and proposed commercial terms. Other countries have also purchased some of the same vaccines we have in our portfolio.
When will we receive the vaccines?	**Pfizer:** The first delivery of the Pfizer vaccines is likely to be as early as the end of the first quarter of 2021.

	AstraZeneca: The first delivery of the AstraZeneca vaccines is likely to be as early as the second quarter of 2021. **Novavax:** The first delivery of the Novavax vaccines is likely to be as early as the second quarter of 2021. **Janssen:** The first delivery of the Janssen vaccines is likely to be as early as the second quarter of 2021. These dates are all subject to Medsafe approval.
Why is the government buying so many vaccines?	We've invested in a portfolio of vaccine candidates so that we're well-placed to get access to a successful vaccine as early as possible. This is an approach that many other countries have taken We've recently seen at least two examples of once-promising vaccines no longer be an option. On 11 December Sanofi announced a delay in their adjuvanted recombinant protein-based COVID-19 vaccine programme after disappointing immune responses in elderly patients in phase I trials. On the same day CSL announced that it would not progress its protein vaccine candidate to Phase 2/3 clinical trials because a protein used as part of the vaccine triggered false positives on HIV tests. This reinforces the benefits of a portfolio approach. We don't want to put all of our eggs in one basket and want to be certain that we'll be able to provide safe and effective vaccines at the earliest possible time. If we have excess vaccines, our first choice will be to donate them to other countries if possible. Issues that might prevent this include: logistics, timing, and how we deal with indemnities.

How much have you spent buying vaccines?	Cabinet has set aside just under $NZ 1 billion ($NZ 983.7 million) from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines. We've now committed a significant amount, but we still have enough funding left to make additional purchases if needed. Under most of our contracts, we only make final payments if the vaccine candidate is approved for use in New Zealand by Medsafe. So if some of the vaccines we've ordered do not get Medsafe approval, we will not be required to pay the full amount.
Is New Zealand doing enough to support access to vaccines for developing countries?	We are committed to making the COVAX Facility as effective as possible. That's why we're investing another $10 million (on top of our existing $7 million) to help ensure developing countries get access to a safe and effective vaccine through COVAX. I've also announced NZ$65 million of Official Development Assistance that will go towards supporting vaccine access for the Pacific Islands – including vaccine purchase, planning and delivery. We have also supported global vaccine research and development efforts with a $30 million contribution to the ACT Accelerator.
What will a vaccine mean for New Zealand's border settings?	At this stage we cannot say how the availability of vaccines in New Zealand and internationally will influence any changes to New Zealand's border controls. Factors that would inform a change to border settings include how long protection lasts, how effective it was at stopping the spread of the virus, and how well it protects people against the virus.
You say everyone in New Zealand will have access to the vaccine. Does that include foreign citizens?	Yes.
How can New Zealanders living overseas access vaccines?	This is likely to vary widely from country to country. I encourage New Zealanders living abroad to first check with local Ministries of Health and/or local health providers. For example, we know that the Australian government has decided that COVID-19 vaccinations will be free for all those in Australia except for those on certain visa types such as transit or tourist visas.

Pfizer/Moderna's results are more promising, why are we purchasing AstraZeneca?	• We've invested in a portfolio of four vaccine candidates so that we're well-placed to get access to a safe and successful vaccine as early as possible, and to manage risks around any one particular candidate not working to meet our needs. • Any vaccine purchased must first receive Medsafe approval before it can be used in New Zealand. • We have been keeping a keen eye on the interim data across a suite of COVID-19 vaccine candidates and are pleased to see promising efficacy results from multiple candidates. However, in most case this data is still not complete. • Decisions to purchase particular vaccines have been made by Ministers drawing upon advice from both officials and independent technical and scientific advisers, and have been assessed against a framework which considers factors including ensuring that our portfolio is not overly reliant on one vaccine technology, timing of delivery, cost, and proposed commercial terms. • We consider AstraZeneca to be a credible contribution to New Zealand's portfolio, but will still need to be assessed and approved in due course by Medsafe. The advantages of the vaccine are that it is fridge-stable, meaning it is compatible with existing storage and distribution channels, which may allow for a more efficient rollout. This judgement is reinforced by the fact that a number of other developed countries have also purchased these vaccines. (Australia, Canada, the UK, the EU and the US have all bought AstraZeneca).

General/Existing Q&As for Ministers

Vaccine Strategy	
What is the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy?	The COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy is an all-of-government approach to ensure New Zealand's access to sufficient quantities of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines at the earliest possible time. The strategy uses New Zealand's capacity and expertise to provide flexibility and choice in the face of competing vaccine options and likely global under-supply.

	It ensures New Zealand contributes actively to wider international efforts to develop COVID-19 vaccines from which we are all likely to benefit, and gives us a voice in decisions such as global distribution and accessibility. The strategy has several strands. It ensures that we are: • Connecting globally to contribute to all aspects of vaccine development, distribution and use • Investing in research that contributes to global efforts, builds relationships and supports early access to a vaccine • Developing the ability to manufacture in case it is needed to secure supply • Optimising regulatory approaches to ensure safety, support research and enable manufacturing • Using purchasing arrangements to secure supply where possible
New Zealand is a small country with a very low number of cases. How can we be sure that we won't get left behind when a vaccine is developed?	Under the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy, we are pursuing a number of different avenues in order to obtain vaccines at the earliest possible time. We are investing globally in vaccine candidates, investing in our own science research capability in New Zealand, looking into ways to increase manufacturing capability, and will use purchasing arrangements to secure supply where possible.
In May you allocated $37 million to the Vaccine Strategy. What have you used that for?	We've allocated $10 million to VAANZ to support New Zealand scientists in contributing their expertise to international research to develop COVID-19 vaccines. We've also contributed $15 million to Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. CEPI is the leading multilateral organisation funding research into COVID-19 vaccines, and becoming a member ensures that we are doing our bit to support global vaccine research efforts. $7 million in Official Development Assistance has gone to Gavi, which works to distribute vaccines to developing countries. Our $3 million investment in upgrading Biocell's manufacturing capacity is part of the $5 million allocated to support domestic manufacturing.

Purchasing Vaccines

What does the recent pause in the Johnson & Johnson vaccine clinical trials potentially mean for New Zealand?	New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy ensures that we will have the ability to access a range of vaccine options. Medsafe is aware that Johnson & Johnson paused an overseas clinical trial of COVID-19 vaccine while it investigated an unexplained illness in a participant. Such pauses are routine in large clinical trials of new medicines and vaccines.
How much funding has been allocated for advance purchase agreements?	Cabinet has set aside just under $NZ 1 billion ($NZ 983.7 million) from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines. We've now committed a significant amount of this, but we still have enough left over to make additional purchases if it proves necessary.

	Under most of our contracts, we are only required to make final payments if the vaccine candidate is approved for use in New Zealand by Medsafe. So if some of the vaccines we've ordered do not get Medsafe approval, we will not be required to pay the full amount.
How much will it cost to bring a vaccine to New Zealand and immunise the population?	It's too early to say at this stage. Prices vary between different companies, and different types of vaccines have different requirements in terms of delivery. Alongside the vaccine strategy led by the Vaccine Taskforce, the Ministry of Health are looking at what will be required to deliver an immunisation programme.
How are the vaccine purchases funded?	COVID-19 vaccines will be funded from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, rather than the Pharmaceutical Budget. Cabinet directed the Taskforce to set up a negotiating team with expertise. This team has led negotiations to purchase COVID-19 vaccines, and provided advice to Ministers as to which agreements we should enter into. The Prime Minister and the Ministers of Health, Finance and Research, Science and Innovation have all approved vaccine purchase agreements. The Director General of Health has also signed the resulting contracts.
Is NZ funding vaccines for the Pacific countries as well?	New Zealand's obligations to the Pacific are a core part of the Vaccine Strategy. We're listening to our Pacific partners on what support they would like from us. We'll be looking to provide what support we can.
Will the govt rule out indemnity for companies? This has happened before, so there is precedent.	It is common for pharmaceutical companies to seek indemnities in relation to pandemic vaccines that they need to develop in accelerated clinical trials. The decision on whether to grant indemnity to a specific pharmaceutical company will ultimately be made by the Minister of Finance. Negotiations with Pfizer included discussion on the giving of indemnities. The Minister has granted an indemnity in accordance with the Public Finance Act 1989, which allows the Minister of Finance to give indemnities only where it appears to the Minister to be necessary or expedient in the public interest. You can be certain that any vaccine we distribute would need to be approved for use in New Zealand, following an assessment by Medsafe that the product meets internationally-accepted criteria for quality, safety and efficacy.
Will vaccines be purchased even if they only provide temporary immunity?	It is too early to speculate on whether a particular kind of vaccine will be considered suitable to deal with COVID-19. However, previous immunisation programmes have successfully used vaccines that provide temporary immunity to stop outbreaks, for example the MeNZB (meningococcal disease) programme in the early 2000s.
Is there any indication on costs given it will be a new vaccine, not a variant on the flu vaccine for example?	Pharmaceutical companies require us to keep our conversations confidential, so we can't comment on how much a vaccine may have cost.

	However, Janssen has been transparent about their pricing and I understand that they have publicly noted their pricing structure.

Comments on individual vaccines

What does the death in the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine clinical trials potentially mean for New Zealand?	New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy ensures that we will have the ability to access a range of vaccine options. This means we will not need to accept the first vaccine that shows promise and we will have other options if one of the vaccine candidates does not complete phase 3 trials.
What does the pause in the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine clinical trials potentially mean for New Zealand?	New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy ensures that we will have the ability to access a range of vaccine options. Medsafe is aware that AstraZeneca paused an overseas clinical trial of COVID-19 vaccine while it investigated an unexplained illness in a participant. Such pauses are routine in large clinical trials of new medicines and vaccines.
What do you think about New Zealanders trying to independently import vaccines? (eg, Don Brash and Russia New Zealand Education Tourism and Trade - RNZETT).	[If bringing into the country personally:] Medsafe has strict rules and regulations surrounding the importation of medicines. https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/Consumers/MIET/ImportMedicines.asp [Importing medicines for commercial use:] Any medicines imported into New Zealand for the purpose of selling or distributing must meet Medsafe approval. Medsafe is the agency that regulates medicines in New Zealand. https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/regulatory/regguidance.asp
There are reports of people looking to privately import vaccines, such as the Gamaleya vaccine (Russian vaccine). Is this something we should be doing?	The COVID-19 vaccine strategy Taskforce is working hard to ensure New Zealanders have access to a safe and effective vaccine, and that they will be distributed equitably in the community once they are available. Medsafe is the regulator of medicines in New Zealand, including vaccines. Any vaccine would need to be approved for use in New Zealand, following an assessment by Medsafe that the product meets internationally-accepted criteria for quality, safety and efficacy.
What stage are you at in your conversations with suppliers?	We have secured access to four COVID-19 vaccines. The world of vaccine development is dynamic. While we're confident our four agreements place us in an excellent position, we're not ruling out other purchases if required. We're unable to provide information on specific engagements that we may be having with any pharmaceutical company.

International Engagement

Does New Zealand have any agreements with Australia to manufacture a vaccine and supply this country?	We are willing and able to work with other countries, and have a close relationship with Australia. The two Taskforces are actively working together to get access to a vaccine for our two countries and our Pacific neighbours, but there are no official agreements in place.
How do we protect against profiteering and	We are working with international partners to support international norms and rules on equitable access and ensuring open trade of vaccines and inputs to vaccine manufacture.

hoarding by other countries?	We have joined the global ACT Accelerator coalition with a pledge of NZ$37 million for COVID-19 testing, treatments and vaccines. We have joined the global COVAX Facility, a global mechanism to invest in scale-up of manufacturing capacity and ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, including to our Pacific neighbours. New Zealand supports equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine for all and has contributed $7million from our Overseas Development Assistance budget to the Gavi Vaccine Alliance.
COVAX Facility	
What is the COVAX Facility and how does it support New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy?	The COVAX Facility is a global initiative to distribute safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, including to New Zealand and the Pacific. The Facility allows us to pre-purchase COVID-19 vaccines from a high-quality, diversified portfolio of vaccine candidates. The COVAX Facility is administered by Gavi (the Global Vaccine Alliance), with a mandate from the global ACT Accelerator initiative. Gavi is a Swiss-based non-profit public-private organisation, which has delivered vaccines to millions of children in the developing world over the last 30 years.
Why is this approach necessary?	The Facility is a critical component of New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy as the timeframe around the development of a safe and available vaccine remains highly uncertain, and it ensures when a vaccine does become available, we will have good access. Also, when the first vaccines become available, we anticipate there will be an immediate global supply shortage due to very high demand. Our best chance at securing a vaccine for our population is to invest in a portfolio of selected vaccine candidates. This will give us the option to purchase a range of possible vaccines as they become available.
Why does the agreement only cover 50 per cent of the population?	The maximum number of doses the Facility provides to any one participating country, is enough to cover 50 percent of their populations. The reason for this limit is so that the COVAX Facility can ensure all participants receive at least enough doses to cover their most vulnerable communities. New Zealand has opted to invest at such a level that we will have the option to purchase as many doses as we can through the COVAX Facility. Any independent agreements would cover the remainder of New Zealand's supply needs above and beyond what we purchase through the COVAX Facility.
What has New Zealand agreed to under its Commitment Agreement?	Under the terms of the Commitment Agreement, New Zealand will have the option to purchase successful COVID-19 vaccines, through the COVAX Facility, for up to 50 percent of the population of New Zealand and the Realm (Tokelau, Cook Islands and Niue).

	To participate in the COVAX Facility, New Zealand is required to make an upfront payment of $24 million dollars to fund vaccine production. Additionally, $3m is provided as insurance in the form of guarantees to Gavi, the organisation responsible for administering the COVAX Facility. This takes our total funding allocation to $27m.
What about countries not involved in the COVAX Facility?	I can't comment on other countries' strategies, but the COVAX Facility has wide buy-in and New Zealand is among those countries committed to it. 85 countries have expressed interest in joining the COVAX Facility, and a further 92 countries are eligible for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) for developing countries. The Facility is the best way to accelerate COVID-19 vaccine production and to ensure equitable distribution worldwide.
How does the COVAX Facility work?	By making an upfront investment in global vaccine development through the COVAX Facility, New Zealand will have the choice to purchase approved vaccines as they become available. New Zealand is not obliged to purchase vaccines through the COVAX Facility. Our upfront investment will give us the option to purchase vaccines, and to make this decision in line with our domestic regulatory standards and national immunisation approach.
When will New Zealand have access to vaccines through the COVAX Facility?	Once a vaccine is approved, it will be distributed equitably among participants. This is to ensure fair and fast distribution to all countries, and to prevent a situation where some countries buy up supply at the expense of availability for others. The COVAX Facility aims to distribute a total of two billion doses to all participants by the end of 2021. This is expected to be enough to cover everyone in the world who is most vulnerable to COVID-19 – including the elderly, frontline health workers and immunocompromised people.
How much more money are we likely to have to invest?	It is too early to say how much a vaccine will cost, as prices of vaccines will vary and their cost of delivery will vary too. Cabinet has approved sufficient funding to secure vaccines through the COVAX Facility and independent agreements with manufacturers. Any negotiations through the COVAX Facility or made independently are commercially sensitive, so we are unable to release an individual figure.
New Zealand has already contributed $15 million to CEPI for global research and $7 million to Gavi, how is this any different?	The funding announced in August gives us access to vaccines for New Zealand and the Realm (Tokelau, Cook Islands and Niue). The $15 million we have provided to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations ensures we are doing our bit to support global vaccine research efforts. Our $7m contribution to Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance) supports the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC).

	COVAX is the global initiative to support vaccine access for developing countries. The COVAX AMC would provide access to vaccines for most Pacific Island countries (but not the Realm).
Research	
How was the Malaghan/Otago partnership selected? Was there a contestable process for accessing the $10 million set aside by the government?	MBIE negotiated directly with the Malaghan Institute and University of Otago to build the New Zealand-based research platform, rather than a contestable process as we needed to move quickly. The Malaghan Institute and University of Otago are credible research organisations with a history of vaccine-related research and commercialisation. The lead team of researchers in the Platform are well-connected in New Zealand and internationally, with existing links to New Zealand manufacturers, and open to collaboration and to moving flexibly in a rapidly-changing environment. The Malaghan Institute and University of Otago had started early to build vaccine research collaborations, so they could be up and running quickly. MBIE has obtained independent advice from New Zealand and overseas researchers on the Vaccine Platform as it has been developed, including from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), to get assurance that the Platform is a credible contribution to national and international vaccine research.
What will the research programme do?	VAANZ is establishing a national COVID-19 vaccine evaluation and development platform to screen, trial and progress the development of potential domestic and international COVID-19 vaccines. This includes building global research collaborations to progress the development of local vaccine candidates and help secure New Zealand's access to potential international vaccines. The screening platform will evaluate safety and efficacy of vaccine candidates for New Zealand. The programme will also link in with domestic manufacturing to determine whether successful candidates can be produced at a commercial scale in New Zealand and will help build New Zealand's capability in vaccine development and production to ensure New Zealand is prepared for future pandemics.
***If asked about the "trials" mentioned in VAANZ's programme:**	As is the case with any vaccine development, human trials can only start when preclinical trials are complete and meet appropriate standards. Human trials must meet rigorous standards.
What is VAANZ doing to prepare for future pandemics?	VAANZ will build global resilience for future pandemics by constructing a coronavirus vaccine seedbank containing hundreds to thousands of potential vaccine candidates, allowing for rapid testing and deployment of vaccines in future pathogenic coronavirus outbreaks. This platform will have the capability to assess the breadth of protection provided by existing international vaccine candidates against likely SARS-CoV-2 spike mutations.
Are you expecting to invent a COVID-19 vaccine in New Zealand?	We have world class scientists in New Zealand with experience in vaccine development who are well-connected internationally. They're continuing to build on those existing relationships to contribute to global developments as well as progress local vaccine candidates. At

	this stage it's too early to tell how far we will progress vaccine candidates in New Zealand but we will no doubt be connected globally with our contribution and building local biotech capability will ensure we're best placed for developing second generation COVID-19 vaccines and for future pandemics.
The pandemic has been on-going for many months and other countries have already developed several vaccine candidates. Why is this funding only being provided to the Malaghan Institute now?	Our investment in VAANZ builds on existing research and work streams from Malaghan and the University of Otago, and this work has been underway for several months to support COVID-19 vaccine development. Since the funding was announced in May, MBIE has been working with Malaghan and Otago University to ensure that the programme meets the needs of the Vaccine Strategy.
What international vaccine research connections do we have?	We've also committed $15 million to join the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. CEPI is the leading multilateral organisation funding research into COVID-19 vaccines, and becoming a member ensures that we are doing our bit to support global vaccine research efforts.
Manufacturing	
There are plenty of manufacturers in New Zealand. Why was the funding awarded to BioCell?	There are two companies that currently contract manufacture vaccines in New Zealand. The decision to support BioCell was primarily because they had a dedicated facility available immediately, and were already undergoing the process to seek Medsafe licensing to produce a COVID-19 vaccine.
The original budget for the vaccine strategy (announced in May) still has $2 million in unallocated manufacturing funding. Is the intent for this funding to go to South Pacific Sera?	The Vaccine Strategy Taskforce has not yet allocated this funding, however, they are currently exploring options so that we can increase our ability to manufacture in New Zealand if there's a sufficient need for it.
How is South Pacific Sera involved in the Vaccine Strategy?	SPS is one of the members of Vaccine Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand, the COVID-19 research platform we've funded under the Vaccine Strategy. The platform brings together a wide range of expertise to ensure our experts are able to make the greatest possible contribution to global research efforts.
Do we have the capability to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines in New Zealand for our own distribution?	New Zealand already produces a small amount of human vaccine material for research purposes and animal vaccines at a commercial scale. Our investment will upgrade BioCell's manufacturing capacity to produce commercially significant quantities of COVID-19 vaccines. This would potentially meet New Zealand's needs for the manufactured vaccine, and also make a valuable contribution to global supply. While this investment will give us the ability to manufacture a vaccine, decisions about whether New Zealand will actually do so are subject to commercial considerations on the part of pharmaceutical companies.

	The Vaccine Strategy Taskforce will explore the potential for this facility to be used as part of its discussion with those companies.
How quickly can we ramp up our manufacturing if a vaccine becomes available?	The contract we have with BioCell aims to have capability in place by the end of January 2021, but that is dependent on lead times for the key equipment required.
If BioCell can manufacture COVID-19 vaccines, why do we need to invest in directly purchasing them?	The Vaccine Strategy seeks to ensure access to a range of COVID-19 vaccine candidates so that we can ensure New Zealanders' access to safe and effective vaccines as soon as possible. BioCell's facility will need to be set up in advance and can only be able to manufacture commercial quantities of one vaccine at a time. We therefore need to invest in multiple vaccine candidates as we can't guarantee that any individual vaccine will be successful.
Are you considering additional investments in vaccine manufacturing (including SPS)?	The Taskforce is considering all options to ensure that New Zealand can access safe and effective vaccines at the earliest possible time, however, I'm unable to name any specific companies that they're in conversation with. It's possible that might involve further investments in manufacturing where that provides us with options to secure supply of a vaccine for New Zealand, or to contribute meaningfully to global efforts. Officials will report on whether there are any additional manufacturing capability that we can potentially leverage in New Zealand.
Safety – Anti-vax/hesitancy	
Will there be vaccine human trials in New Zealand?	It is too early to say if there will be human trials of a COVID-19 vaccine in New Zealand. If pharmaceutical agencies wish to run a trial here in New Zealand, we have systems in place that prioritise the quality of trials and the safety of New Zealanders.
How can we be sure the vaccine will be safe?	Safety will always be our priority and we will not be rushed into accepting the first vaccine that shows promise without the vaccine meeting internationally agreed criteria for safety, efficacy and quality. This includes data from well-designed clinical trials. COVID-19 vaccines must pass Medsafe's rigorous approval process.
Vaccines generally take months or years to pass regulatory processes – does the government plan to fast-track this for a COVID-19 vaccine?	Any vaccine for COVID-19 will need to meet internationally-accepted criteria for quality, safety and efficacy before Medsafe will approve its use here. Medsafe is working to optimise their processes so that any promising vaccines will be fully assessed as quickly as possible against the same criteria used for all other medicines that enter New Zealand. Medsafe is already engaging with a number of pharmaceutical companies, which are developing COVID vaccine candidates. Medsafe is also engaging with its regulatory colleagues around the world. The COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Taskforce is working at pace to ensure that a safe and effective vaccine is obtained as early as possible. Safety will always be our absolute priority and we will not be rushed into accepting the first vaccine that shows promise without proper testing taking place first to confirm its safety and effectiveness.

How long will it take to vaccinate the population?	The duration of an immunisation programme cannot yet be forecast, because it depends on the timing and quantity of vaccine shipments, levels of demand and the resources available to carry out vaccination. As a comparison, our annual influenza programmes vaccinate more than a million New Zealanders each year with the bulk of these vaccinations occurring between April and May.
How will you address "vaccine hesitancy" and "anti-vaxxers" in the community?	The COVID-19 immunisation programme implementation will require a significant communications campaign, including a focus on building and maintaining public confidence and explaining any prioritisation decisions. The Ministry of Health will lead the development of a communications strategy to support the agreed immunisation implementation approach, including proactive communications to support public confidence in the vaccine and immunisation programme.
How will we know the vaccine is safe for our Māori and Pacific populations, given that human trials in NZ are very unlikely?	We are not aware of any evidence from previous immunisation programmes of Māori and Pacific people being more vulnerable to adverse effects following vaccination.
Pfizer APA announcement	
How much did this cost?	That information is currently commercially sensitive. What I can tell you, is that we have made sure this was the best option for New Zealand from this supplier at this time.
Why didn't you purchase more doses/enough for the whole population?	What this deal has done is secure doses from one of the projected earliest available candidates for use in New Zealand. This is just the first of a number of purchases we will make, which will create a portfolio of vaccine options for New Zealand and the Pacific. 1.5 million doses (enough for 750,000 people) is the amount agreed; however the agreement also includes the possibility to request additional doses at a later stage if they are available. We are committed to supplying vaccines to New Zealand and the Pacific at the earliest possible time.
Has the government provided indemnity to the pharmaceutical company in this deal?	It is common for pharmaceutical companies to seek indemnities in relation to pandemic vaccines that they need to develop in accelerated clinical trials. Negotiations with Pfizer included discussion on the giving of indemnities. The Minister has granted an indemnity in accordance with the Public Finance Act 1989, which allows the Minister of Finance to give indemnities only where it appears to the Minister to be necessary or expedient in the public interest. You can be certain that any vaccine we distribute would need to be approved for use in New Zealand, following an assessment by Medsafe that the product meets internationally-accepted criteria for quality, safety and efficacy.

Isn't this a duplication of what you signed up for with COVAX?	The COVAX Facility is a global facility that New Zealand has joined. Allocation under the Facility could provide up to 50% population coverage. Pursuing these direct deals with companies is just another way of ensuring New Zealand has sufficient doses as early as possible.
Will we give this vaccine to the Pacific (noting it's an RNA that requires extreme cold chain distribution)?	At present our focus is on building our portfolio. It's important to remember that this is just one of a variety of options the government is signing. All of the options we're looking at will have different features, and will also become available at different times. Our priority is making sure that whatever vaccines the Pacific can access are safe and fit-for-purpose.
What else are you doing to support Pacific access to vaccines?	New Zealand is taking several actions to support Pacific access to vaccines. This includes a contribution to the COVAX Facility's Advance Market Commitment (AMC) which will support safe and equitable access to developing countries including in the Pacific, and through our support for the WHO-led COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan.
Have there been any adverse events in the Pfizer trials to date?	This question is best answered by Pfizer BioNTech.

Janssen Announcement

Why didn't New Zealand purchase Moderna, given its promising results?	There are many factors that guide our purchasing decisions as we build a portfolio – we don't look at any one vaccine candidate in isolation. We look at: - safety - efficacy - when the vaccine will be available - securing a range of vaccines that work in different ways - how and where the vaccine will be manufactured We also consider the suitability of each vaccine for use in New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours. We have a focus on equity and access. Due to commercial reasons, we can only announce agreements once they have been confirmed.
Moderna's results are more promising, why are we purchasing Janssen?	The news about Moderna's successful early results, like the news from Pfizer last week, is encouraging. The decision to purchase the Janssen vaccine was not made overnight – we have been having productive and ongoing conversations with vaccine suppliers over recent months. We consider Janssen, along with our Pfizer purchase, to be a credible contribution to our portfolio. We have been keeping a keen eye on the interim data across COVID-19 vaccine candidates and are pleased to see promising efficacy results from multiple candidates, however this data is not complete.

Why won't you be more upfront about which pharmaceutical companies you're in discussion with?	Our discussions with pharmaceutical suppliers are commercially sensitive. We are not able to discuss the specifics of these discussions, as it may prevent us from getting the best possible outcome for New Zealanders. We will announce further agreements as they are confirmed.
Why is New Zealand buying so many vaccines, when other countries need them?	Our approach is in line with what other developed countries are doing. We are ensuring that we have access to multiple vaccine candidates, as we can't guarantee that any individual vaccine will be successful. New Zealand supports equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine for all. We have joined the global ACT Accelerator coalition with a pledge of NZ$37 million for COVID-19 testing, treatments and vaccines. As part of our $37 million dollar investment, $7 million has been contributed to the Gavi Vaccine Alliance. We have also joined the global COVAX Facility, a global mechanism to invest in scale-up of manufacturing capacity and ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, including to our Pacific neighbours.
What are the storage requirements for this vaccine?	New Zealand will receive the vaccine at fridge stable temperature, 2-8° C. This makes the vaccine candidate compatible with standard vaccine distribution channels.
What are the characteristics of the Janssen vaccine?	Taken from www.janssen.com/johnson-johnson-initiates-pivotal-global-phase-3-clinical-trial-janssens-covid-19-vaccine-candidate: • The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine candidate leverages the Company's AdVac® technology platform, which has been used to vaccinate more than 110,000 people to date across Janssen's investigational vaccine programs. New Zealand will receive the vaccine at fridge stable temperature, 2-8° C. This makes the vaccine candidate compatible with standard vaccine distribution channels.
Why did we purchase Pfizer if it's so difficult to store, while other vaccines are easier, such as Janssen's?	If the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine is successful, and passes regulatory approvals in New Zealand, it will provide us with early access to a vaccine. The Taskforce's approach is to secure access to a range of vaccine candidates, to give us options.
Will this vaccine be provided to the Pacific?	Our priority is to ensure New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours have access to safe and effective vaccines. We are in discussion with the Pacific about their needs and the support we can provide.
Are you comfortable with the fact that this vaccine uses foetal cell lines?	I'm comfortable that the vaccines we're purchasing meet high ethical standards. The Janssen vaccine uses the same technology used to develop other commonly administered vaccines, such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, shingles and small pox.
When will New Zealand get these vaccines?	The first delivery of the Janssen vaccines is likely to be as early as the second quarter of 2021.

	These dates are subject to Medsafe's approval for use of the vaccine. **Note that in the initial media release in November 2020 we said Janssen would be delivered as early as third quarter of 2021 but this has since changed. (Jan 2021)*
How much did this cost?	I can't comment specifically on this agreement in terms of costs, but Janssen has been transparent about their pricing and I understand that they have publicly noted their pricing structure.
Why would New Zealand purchase this vaccine if the trials were paused previously?	New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy ensures that we will have the ability to access a range of vaccine options, if and when a suitable vaccine is developed. This means we will not need to accept the first vaccine that shows promise and we will have other options if one of the vaccine candidates does not complete phase 3 trials. Medsafe is aware that Janssen paused an overseas clinical trial of COVID-19 vaccine while it investigated an unexplained illness in a participant. Such pauses are routine in large clinical trials of new medicines and vaccines.
Why was the trial paused?	This question is best answered by Janssen.
What is the decision process for which vaccines New Zealand buys?	There are many factors that guide our purchasing decisions as we build a portfolio. We look at: - safety - efficacy - when the vaccine will be available - securing a range of vaccines that work in different ways - how and where the vaccine will be manufactured We also consider the suitability of each vaccine for use in New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours. We have a focus on equity and access.
What is the current status of the trials? Have the trials been successful so far?	This is a question best directed to Janssen, for the most up to date information.
Which other countries have purchased the Janssen vaccine?	I'm aware that the USA, Europe, Canada and the UK have also entered into a form of agreement with Janssen.
Where are the vaccines trials currently?	This question is best answered by Janssen.
Is New Zealand still participating in the COVAX Facility, or only doing these direct deals with pharma companies? (Is NZ taking a 'selfish approach'?)	New Zealand continues to participate in the COVAX Facility, a global facility for the allocation of vaccines. Through this, New Zealand has the option of receiving up to 50% population coverage. We are also supporting the COVAX Facility's Advance Market Commitment which will cover 92 developing countries, including most of the Pacific. We judge it necessary to pursue both channels at the same time, as there are a lot of uncertainties around vaccine procurement and distribution.
Will we give this vaccine to the Pacific (noting that Pfizer is an RNA requiring	All of the options we're looking at will have different features, and will also become available at different times. Our priority is making

extreme cold chain distribution but this one is not)?	sure that whatever vaccines the Pacific can access are safe and fit-for-purpose.
What else are you doing to support Pacific access to vaccines?	New Zealand is taking several actions to support Pacific access to vaccines. This includes a contribution to the COVAX Facility's Advance Market Commitment (AMC) which will support safe and equitable access to developing countries including in the Pacific, and we are exploring ways to share any surplus doses with Pacific neighbours. $75 million of Official Development Assistance has been set aside to support Pacific and global vaccine access and rollout. We are also providing support to the WHO-led COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan.

AstraZeneca Announcement

How are the vaccines stored?	The AstraZeneca vaccines are fridge stable (4-8 degrees Celsius) and are likely to be compatible with our existing distribution channels.
There have been media reports that suggest a number of data discrepancies – can people have confidence that AstraZeneca is accurately recording and reporting their data?	All clinical trial data will be reviewed by Medsafe prior to any vaccine being approved for use, to ensure it's safe and effective.
What is the current status of AstraZeneca clinical trials? Is there an intent to start any new trials or stop any existing trials?	That question is best answered by AstraZeneca.
Have there been any serious adverse events in the trials so far?	That question is best answered by AstraZeneca.
Why did AstraZeneca previously pause its trials?	My understanding is that pauses are routine in large clinical trials of new medicines and vaccines. However, any questions about specific cases are best answered by AstraZeneca.
Is the AstraZeneca vaccine dependent on science that might be considered unethical? (Eg, Does it use GMO, squalene, etc)	I'm comfortable that the vaccines we're purchasing meet high ethical standards.
What are the demographics of the clinical trial volunteers?	That question is best answered by AstraZeneca.
How will the vaccines will be transported?	It's likely that vaccines will be delivered by air, and the Ministry of Health is working hard to ensure that however we receive vaccines, we will be prepared for an efficient roll out.

Novavax Announcement	
How are the vaccines stored?	The Novavax vaccines are fridge stable (4-8 degrees Celsius) and are likely to be compatible with our existing distribution channels.
Novavax is a newer company, how sure are you that they're a reliable supplier?	The decisions to purchase a particular vaccines are not made overnight – we have been having productive and ongoing conversations with vaccine suppliers over recent months. We consider AstraZeneca and Novavax to be credible contributions to our portfolio. This judgement is reinforced by the fact that a number of other developed countries have also purchased these vaccines. (Australia, Canada, the UK, the EU and the US have all bought AstraZeneca; all but the EU have also bought Novavax). We have been keeping a keen eye on the interim data across COVID-19 vaccine candidates and are pleased to see promising efficacy results from multiple candidates, however this data is not complete.