

AHHA PRINCIPLE STATEMENT ON COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAM COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Rebuilding public trust in the COVID-19 vaccination program is critical to addressing the pandemic and its impacts. This will require a thorough understanding of community concerns and expectations, ensuring person-centred care is delivered and the vaccine rollout is accessible.

For success to be realised, communication must be clear, consistent and concise and meet the needs of the community. The following guiding principles are provided:

GOVERNMENTS

Credible: Government decision making in relation to COVID-19 vaccination strategies must be transparent, take into account the clinical and epidemiological evidence and be underpinned by authentic, collaborative relationships across all levels of government. The independence of regulatory decision makers must be maintained and the health and community sectors supported in a timely manner with emerging evidence in the Australian context

Harmonised: Nationally consistent communication relating to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout must be underpinned by a publicly available strategic framework, agreed between governments and knowing that messaging relating to a single state is not restricted to the population in that state. COVID-19 vaccine communication must be reliable, while recognising that information may be evolving. Messaging must be and accessible and equitable.

Trusted: Bodies such as HealthDirect Australia should be established and promoted as the national coordination point for trusted accurate sources of information and advice. This will require leveraging existing capabilities and supporting the integration of locally relevant health information.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SECTORS

Supported: Community engagement for improving the uptake of vaccinations should be co-designed and tailored to gender, preferred language, a diversity of educational and health literacy backgrounds, and local culture. The diverse concerns of communities around the COVID-19 vaccination must be acknowledged and the community voice empowered to address those concerns within the broader vaccine strategy. Community members should be supported to use their own strategies to communicate via trusted messaging systems.

Efficient: A national strategy with a regional response that maximises local vaccine administration channels and supports innovative solutions for underserved populations, high-risk groups, essential workers and rural communities must be developed. The inclusion of community members, health and social care providers in mass vaccination strategies will be necessary to improving ease of access and achieving high uptake of vaccines across all population groups. The experience of getting vaccinated should be simple and efficient.

MEDIA

Responsible: The social responsibility of media to report accurately when discussing health issues relating to the COVID-19 vaccine program must be recognised. While respecting autonomy of expression, the risks of the failure to vaccinate should be emphasised, and community concerns, misinformation and anti-vaccine content and its sources should be clearly placed in context.

Accurate: Trusted health and community voices should be engaged to co-develop communications to address the unique needs of and reach Australia's diverse communities and individuals. Vaccine related information, mental and social health support should be tailored for dissemination through social media platforms. This should be underpinned by cross sector collaborations to promote accurate content.