

National Cabinet

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AGENDA

Saturday 16 July 2022
10.30am-11.30am AEST

MCN Telepresence

1. Acknowledgment of Country Welcome and introduction	Prime Minister
2. Update from Chief Medical Officer	Professor Paul Kelly
3. Next Steps	First Ministers

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Meeting of National Cabinet
16 July 2022 – Virtual attendance
Record of Meeting

1. Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introduction

The Prime Minister:

- Provided an acknowledgement of country and welcomed Premiers and Chief Ministers to the meeting.

2. Update from Chief Medical Officer

The Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly:

- Provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic, including new variants and their potential impact, and the impacts on hospital capacity and broader health system. Australia is beginning to see a new wave of COVID-19 infections driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron sub variants, which will increase the pressure on our health system.
- Noted that this wave comes at a time when health systems are already under pressure responding to the earlier winter influenza season.
- Provided advice on potential public health mitigations.

Following the discussion of the current COVID-19 situation, First Ministers:

- **Noted** the advice of the Commonwealth Chief Medical Office.

3. Next Steps

- The Prime Minister advised that the Commonwealth has **agreed** to reinstate the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment to 30 September 2022. Eligibility for the payment will be backdated to 1 July 2022, to ensure that anyone unable to work owing to isolation requirements in this period, without access to paid sick leave, is supported.
- All First Ministers **agreed** to share the costs of the payment 50:50 between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, with State and Territory shares to reflect the proportion of their populations receiving the payment.
- The Commonwealth **advised** that it has further agreed to create a new, temporary telehealth item so GPs can spend longer with their patients to assess their suitability for oral COVID-19 antivirals. This will enable those most vulnerable to COVID-19 to quickly access medical treatments and help ease the burden on hospitals.
- State and Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers also shared updates from across each jurisdiction, including noting initiatives such as increasing access to supplies of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs).
- All First Ministers **agreed** that jurisdictions will utilise existing RAT stocks funded through 50/50 cost share arrangements with the Commonwealth to support the public health response.

- All First Ministers **agreed** that jurisdictions and the Commonwealth will provide consistent health messaging encouraging Australians to follow the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee's recommendations on health behaviours including wearing masks indoors, getting tested and practising good respiratory hygiene.
- The Prime Minister **agreed** to consider extension of Australian Defence Force (ADF) assistance in residential aged care facilities, subject to the impact on ADF resources of other pressures, such as support to flood-affected areas.

Following discussion on Next Steps, First Ministers:

- **Agreed** to meet regularly through the 2022 winter period.