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AGENDA

Wednesday 31 August 2022

3.00pm – 4.30pm

Sydney Commonwealth Parliament Office,
1 Bligh Street, Sydney

Agenda item	Format	Presenter
1. Acknowledgment of Country Welcome and introduction	Oral Update	Prime Minister
2. COVID-19 a) Update from the Acting Chief Medical Officer b) COVID Settings c) Update on Planning for Future Waves	Oral Update Discussion Paper for Noting	Professor Michael Kidd

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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NATIONAL CABINET MEETING

31 August 2022

ATTENDEE LIST

COMMONWEALTH

Prime Minister
Secretary

The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP
Professor Glyn Davis AC

NEW SOUTH WALES

Premier
Secretary

The Honourable Dominic Perrottet MP
Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter

VICTORIA

Premier
Secretary

The Honourable Daniel Andrews MP
Mr Jeremi Moule

QUEENSLAND

Premier
Director General

The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk MP
Ms Rachel Hunter

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Premier
Director General

The Honourable Mark McGowan MLA
Ms Emily Roper

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Premier
Chief Executive Officer

The Honourable Peter Malinauskas
Mr Damien Walker

TASMANIA

Premier
Secretary

The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff
Ms Jenny Gale

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Chief Minister
Director-General

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Ms Kathy Leigh

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Chief Minister
Acting Chief Executive Officer

The Honourable Natasha Fyles MLA
Ms Kathleen Robinson PSM (attending virtually)

GUEST SPEAKERS FOR EXPERT BRIEFINGS

Professor Michael Kidd, Acting Chief Medical Officer (attending virtually)

ITEM 2: Planning for Future COVID-19 Waves

NATIONAL CABINET**31 August 2022**

**AUTHOR: COMMONWEALTH
FOR INFORMATION**

RECOMMENDATIONS

That First Ministers:

1. Note work underway in planning for future waves of COVID-19.

KEY POINTS

1. While the recent BA.4/BA.5-driven wave of COVID-19 infections has peaked, we know that Australia (as with the rest of the world) will continue to experience waves of infection in coming years – potentially placing pressure on the health system and community more broadly.
2. The Commonwealth Government will continue to reassess the prevailing epidemiology and to recalibrate the COVID-19 response as necessary, based on the medical advice. The response will require all Governments to continue to work together at various levels, including through the National Cabinet, the Health Ministers' Meeting (HMM), the Health Chief Executives Forum, and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).
3. Commonwealth, states and territories will continue to recalibrate the public health response which will include considering testing and isolation policies; and ongoing surveillance to assess the impact of the COVID-19, including new variants of concern if and when they occur; and refreshing communication approaches.
4. Work is also underway for longer term public health management in the context of planning for the establishment of an Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC). The Commonwealth has commenced consultation with the states and territories as critical partners, including with Chief Health Officers, the AHPPC, Chief Executives and Health Ministers. An Australian CDC will, in partnership with states and territories, enhance national coordination and improve preparedness for future pandemics and health emergencies and strengthen public health capacity.
5. Our key defence mechanism is to protect the most vulnerable Australians from severe disease and protect the health system to not become overburdened by potential new COVID-19 waves or the impact of new variants of concern. Planning for this includes:
 - a. Tailored communication and supports for those most at risk of severe COVID-19 infection.
 - i. For example, working with states and territories to target communication around treatments, vaccination, boosters and risk mitigation.

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- b. How Australia can be well positioned to have access and secure supply of any new vaccines and treatments.
 - i. For example, the Commonwealth continues to work with vaccine manufacturers to negotiate the earliest possible access to variant-specific vaccines, and is also working with pharmaceutical companies to encourage them to apply for Therapeutic Goods Administration approval of new vaccines and treatments.
- c. Providing clear guidance to industry and business sectors to equip the private sector with the tools and knowledge to most effectively manage risk as appropriate to their individual circumstance.
 - i. For example, through regular National Coordination Mechanism meetings and via peak bodies.
- 6. Planning will draw on the expertise of relevant expert advisory committees including the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.
- 7. The Commonwealth has also continued to support Australia's response to COVID-19 by investing in a number of supports to strengthen the health and aged care response. This has included:
 - a. Extending funding support to state and territory hospital systems through the National Partnership Agreement on COVID-19 Response (the Partnership).
 - b. Launching information campaigns to promote the critical importance of getting booster shots, antivirals and COVID safe behaviours. Current campaigns include:
 - i. ['Boost'](#) campaign for First Nations audiences commenced on 23 June. It encourages people to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations.
 - ii. ['COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments'](#) campaign commenced on 22 July. It increases awareness of eligibility and promotes availability of antiviral treatments.
 - iii. ['COVID safe behaviours'](#) campaign commenced on 2 August. It encourages people to follow public health advice to help slow the spread of COVID-19.
 - c. Undertaking an independent review of existing COVID-19 vaccine and treatment procurement arrangements which will provide recommendations and inform on future purchasing strategies.
 - d. Expanding access to the fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccines and COVID-19 treatments.
 - e. Introducing new temporary MBS items so GPs can spend longer with their patients to assess their suitability for oral COVID-19 treatments, which enables those most vulnerable to COVID-19 to quickly access medical treatments and help keep people out of hospital.

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- f. Supporting aged care residents and workers through the release of the Winter Plan for aged care residents to strengthen our first line of defence against COVID-19 in aged care.

RISKS AND SENSITIVITIES

8. The current wave of COVID-19 infections has peaked, but it is most likely that Australia will continue to experience waves of COVID-19 infection every four to six months. It is critical that Australia maintains the capability to predict and manage future waves effectively through scalable, flexible interventions and measures.

NEXT STEPS

9. Representatives of all Governments will continue to plan together through existing fora including the AHPPC and HMM. Further advice regarding the potential reduction of COVID-19 case isolation periods and the refresh of communication materials is anticipated within the next fortnight.
10. A further formal update on planning work will be provided at the next National Cabinet meeting.

Meeting of National Cabinet**31 August 2022 – CPO, Sydney****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. COVID-19

The Commonwealth Acting Chief Medical Officer, Professor Michael Kidd:

- Provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic, including uptake of vaccine booster doses and COVID-19 treatments.

- s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Following the discussion of the current COVID-19 situation s 22(1)(a)(ii), First Ministers:

- **Agreed** to reduce isolation periods for COVID-19 positive cases from seven to five days following a positive test, for people with no symptoms at five days. Seven days isolation remains for workers in high risk settings including aged care, disability care, and those providing care in the home. This will come into effect from Friday 9 September.
- **Agreed** the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) will come back to National Cabinet by 9 September 2022 with further advice on isolation requirements for health care settings.
- **Agreed** to remove the mandatory wearing of masks on domestic air travel from Friday 9 September.
- **Noted** that decisions on requirements for wearing masks on public transport are a matter for each jurisdiction, taking into account their own circumstances.
- **Agreed** to meet again in mid-September for a further discussion on the future of the PLDP.
- **Noted** the work underway in planning for future waves of COVID-19.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)