



COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Parents and Guardians of Children Aged 5–11 Years in the Barwon Region

Acknowledgement of Country

The COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Parents and Guardians Project Team ("the Project Team") acknowledges the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners and custodians on the land on which we live, work and play and on which this project was completed. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Nations people.



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An unreserved thank you also to our sponsor organisation, Barwon Health for the support and commitment provided to the Project Team, particularly from Project Champion Anna Burgess (Executive Director, Strategy & Planning), who was always gracious with her time despite operating within a pandemic.

We also acknowledge and thank the 150 parents and guardians who completed the online poll and provided invaluable insight into local opinion.

Finally, we would like to thank our families and colleagues for supporting us through the project.



Foreword from Barwon Health

The Barwon South West Public Health Unit was delighted to have one of the Leaders for Geelong teams take up our proposal on COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy in parents. The success of the COVID-19 response in the Barwon South West region is due to the community leadership in our region, and the support and contribution we have had from the Leaders for Geelong team is another great example of this.

In putting forward the project proposal in June 2021, it was uncertain when vaccination for children and adolescents would begin. It was announced on 27 August that vaccination of adolescents aged 12 to 15 years would commence on 13 September, and on 10 December 2021 that vaccination of children aged 5 to 11 years would commence on 10 January 2022. These announcements required the Project Team to respond with agility and resilience to the rapidly evolving situation.

It was very useful to receive timely advice from the Project Team on their preliminary analysis of their poll results on 3 December 2021, and this assisted us with the planning for the regional rollout of the program for vaccination of children aged 5 to 11 years. This advice provided us with qualitative insights into the reasons for hesitancy in our community and also which sources of advice were perceived as trustworthy.

The latest data for our region shows that 65% of children aged 5 to 11 years have received a first dose and well over half of them have already received their second dose. Every vaccination helps with reducing the spread of COVID across the community and in particular helps to protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic irrevocably changed the way the world functioned, from how we work and live to how we shoulder the continuing physical, emotional and mental load associated with living within, hopefully, a once-in-a-lifetime public health crisis. From an evidentiary perspective, the availability and uptake of COVID-19 vaccination has provided protection for over 95% of people over the age of 16 years in Australia against severe disease, hospitalization and/or death, an indication of low COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy.

However, at the commencement of this project sentiment regarding COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy for children under 18 years of age was unclear. The international public health response, particularly the United States of America, was heavily influential on the pace at which Australia's response to the pandemic evolved, paving the way for approval of children aged 5 to 11 years to receive a COVID-19 vaccination in January 2022, earlier than previously anticipated.

This report therefore analyses COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in parents and guardians of children, specifically those between 5 to 11 years of age within the Barwon region (City of Greater Geelong, Surfcoast Shire, Colac-Otway Shire and the Borough of Queenscliff) through the development and implementation of a localised poll ("the Project Poll"). The findings have been cross-referenced with other relevant and publicly available data (national and Victorian) at the time of project completion.

The Project Poll specifically enquired as to the following:

- Postcodes of respondents
- Whether the respondent identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Whether the respondent was feeling hesitant for their child or children aged 5 to 11 years to receive a COVID-19 vaccine
- Whether the respondent would provide consent for their child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine
- Reasons for any vaccine hesitancy

- Sources of information which assisted in decision making to provide consent for the COVID-19 vaccine
- Ranking of the most trustworthy and influential resources identified
- Accessibility of vaccination (preferred access method)
- Access difficulty

The 150 responses to the Project Poll indicated that a majority (57%) of respondents were not feeling hesitant for their child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, whereas approximately 35% of respondents were feeling hesitant.

Despite hesitancy, 74% of respondents indicated consent would be provided for their child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccine safety was the main reason for hesitancy.

General practitioners/healthcare practitioners, Australian and International research and National and State Government resources were the top three sources of information considered assistive in decision making.

A state government vaccination hub and general practitioners were also the preferred access method, suggesting a degree of trust (actual or perceived) as a relevant consideration for parents and guardians. Pharmacies were considered least desirable to access a COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years.

Recommendations based on an analysis of the Project Poll data as well as other relevant and available data are sorted into two interrelated categories; the distribution of information and access to COVID-19 vaccines. Brief recommendations are also made in anticipation of the eventual approval of a COVID-19 vaccine for younger age cohorts.

Finally, the report identifies the significant challenges of working on a project focused on a key issue arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, within the pandemic and working alongside Barwon region's key organisation responsible for managing the pandemic response.

Background

The lives of all Australians over the last two years have been impacted in a way that will leave an indelible mark on memories, feelings and lifestyles for years to come, inclusive of the Barwon region.

When the COVID-19 virus hit Australian shores in early 2020, we immediately felt the shockwaves run through our hospitals, workplaces, businesses, schools and events. Our homes became our sanctuary (or a lonely place to exist for some) and we were forced to slow down, pivot and adapt to new ways of working, schooling and living.

Perhaps the word that best describes the collective feeling around Australia and the world during the last two years is uncertainty. Much of the early uncertainty was around how harmful the virus might be. Overseas reports of overwhelmed hospitals, makeshift treatment tents and supermarkets being cleared of their shelves had us all preparing for the worst.

Fast forward to early 2021 when local cases of the COVID-19 virus were relatively low around Australia, compared to other countries. Vaccines had been developed and approved for adult use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), to minimise the spread and risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

The Australian and state governments commenced a phased COVID-19 vaccine rollout, targeting our vulnerable cohorts, frontline healthcare and aged care workers. As COVID-19 vaccine supply grew, vaccination was opened to more cohorts with the aim to eventually include adolescents then children (see Annexure A - Official Australian COVID-19 Resources and Information).

For Victoria particularly, the ongoing restrictions and lockdowns were physically and emotionally exhausting. What started as a target of elimination soon evolved to one of suppression, with COVID-19 vaccination being the main tool.

A review of public sentiment over the course of 2020, 2021 and 2022 indicated a growing resignation, certainly among the adult population, that COVID-19 vaccination could be the catalyst for life returning to a semblance of normal (see Appendix B - Media Resources).

In mid 2021, what remained unclear was community sentiment regarding COVID-19 vaccination of children aged under 12 years.

International regulators were already anticipating an extension of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout to children aged under 12 years. This accelerated the discussion in Australia from October 2021, and culminated in a decision by ATAGI recommending that from January 2022 everyone aged 5 years and older, should receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

As at the time of project completion, there are currently no COVID-19 vaccines approved for children aged 4 years and under, internationally or nationally.

Generally speaking, the Australian population demonstrated an acceptance (perhaps reluctantly) of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination (first, second and now third doses). That said, uncertainty regarding vaccine safety was identified as a potential and significant barrier to vaccination uptake and protection of the community at large.

Vaccine Hesitancy

According to the World Health Organisation, vaccine hesitancy is defined as “a delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccination despite availability of vaccination services”. It is important to differentiate this term and the cohort of people that may fit within this definition, from those that are anti-vaccination (see Figure 1 below). The main factors that influence vaccine hesitancy are complacency, convenience (e.g. location of vaccination centres/clinics) and confidence.

A vaccine hesitant community is thought to be one where the demand for vaccines is lower than expected.

This project was proposed and supported by Barwon Health, to understand COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy rates and reasons in parents and guardians in the Barwon region, noting the region has a traditionally high immunisation rate for other vaccines.

The Project Team aimed to support Barwon Health with local insights and recommendations to improve engagement and support decision making of parents and guardians regarding COVID-19 vaccination.

The Project Team adopted a neutral approach to gathering information and understanding the landscape of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy within the Barwon region. This was done to:

- ensure the provision of objective feedback to Barwon Health
- support Barwon Health in communications with the community and
- support decision making regarding service offerings for managing COVID-19 based on identified needs and preferences

Figure 1: Vaccine Hesitancy Continuum

Vaccine Hesitancy Continuum

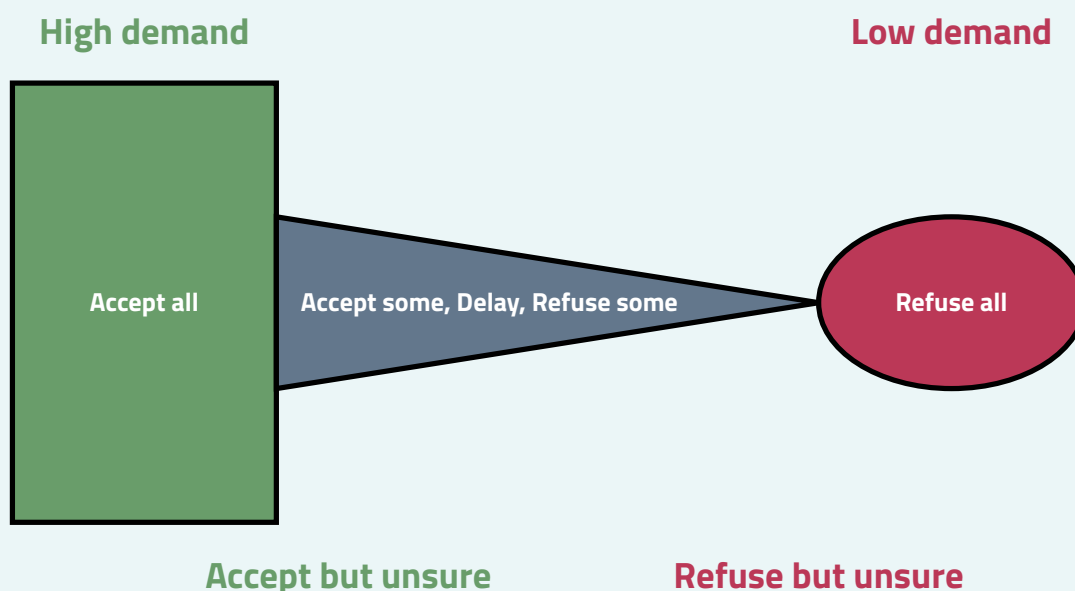


Image adapted from the World Health Organisation's Report of the SAGE Working Group on Vaccine Hesitancy (2014)



The first doses need to be given a number of days apart:

PFIZER
at least 21 days between doses

RESTROOMS

Project Brief and Scope

Barwon Health project brief:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the issue of vaccine hesitancy onto the central stage. Ensuring that the Australian community is sufficiently vaccinated is crucial to reopening Australia's borders (so that international tourists can return) and to the return to a more liveable situation where families can plan catch-ups and holiday trips.

The focus for this project is on 'vaccine hesitancy by parents and carers' and is designed to support the anticipated roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines to children in early 2022, to complete the offering of the vaccines to the Barwon Region.

What do we know about vaccine hesitancy?

A recent article by [Associate Professor Margie Danchin \(Murdoch Children's Research Centre\)](#) and [Professor Terry Nolan \(Doherty Institute\)](#) described vaccine hesitancy as an issue of global importance. The behaviour of vaccine-hesitant individuals is influenced by a number of factors, including confidence, complacency and convenience.

Explanatory theories of decision making can be useful in understanding why vaccine-hesitant individuals interpret the severity and susceptibility to disease and vaccine risk differently. It is estimated that up to one-third of parents express distrust and reluctance to have their children vaccinated. New approaches to improving vaccine confidence and trust in vaccines are needed.

This project aligns with a number of the G21- Geelong Regional Alliance's priorities:

- **Liveability** – Vibrant, liveable cities and towns
- **Equity & Wellbeing** – Supported, fair and nurturing Barwon communities
- **Tourism** – A thriving and sustainable Barwon tourism economy

It is proposed that one of the outcomes from this project will be that residents of the Barwon region have access to accurate information, tailored for the region, to support decision making on accessing COVID-19 vaccines for children in their care.

In addition, this is an opportunity to contribute to the marketing of the Barwon region as "clever and creative" by developing tools or information that can be used across Victoria and beyond.

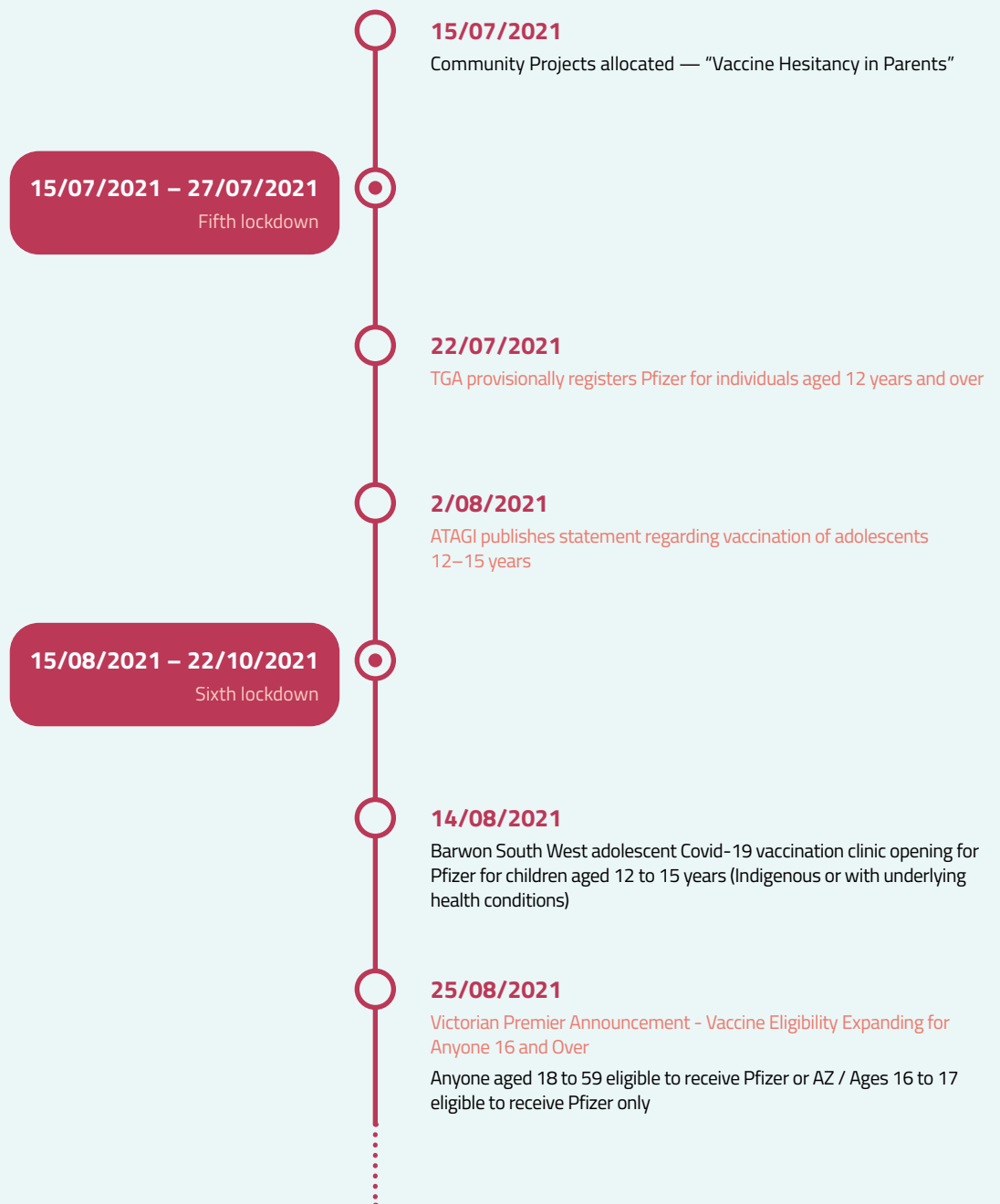
The key stakeholders for this project include:

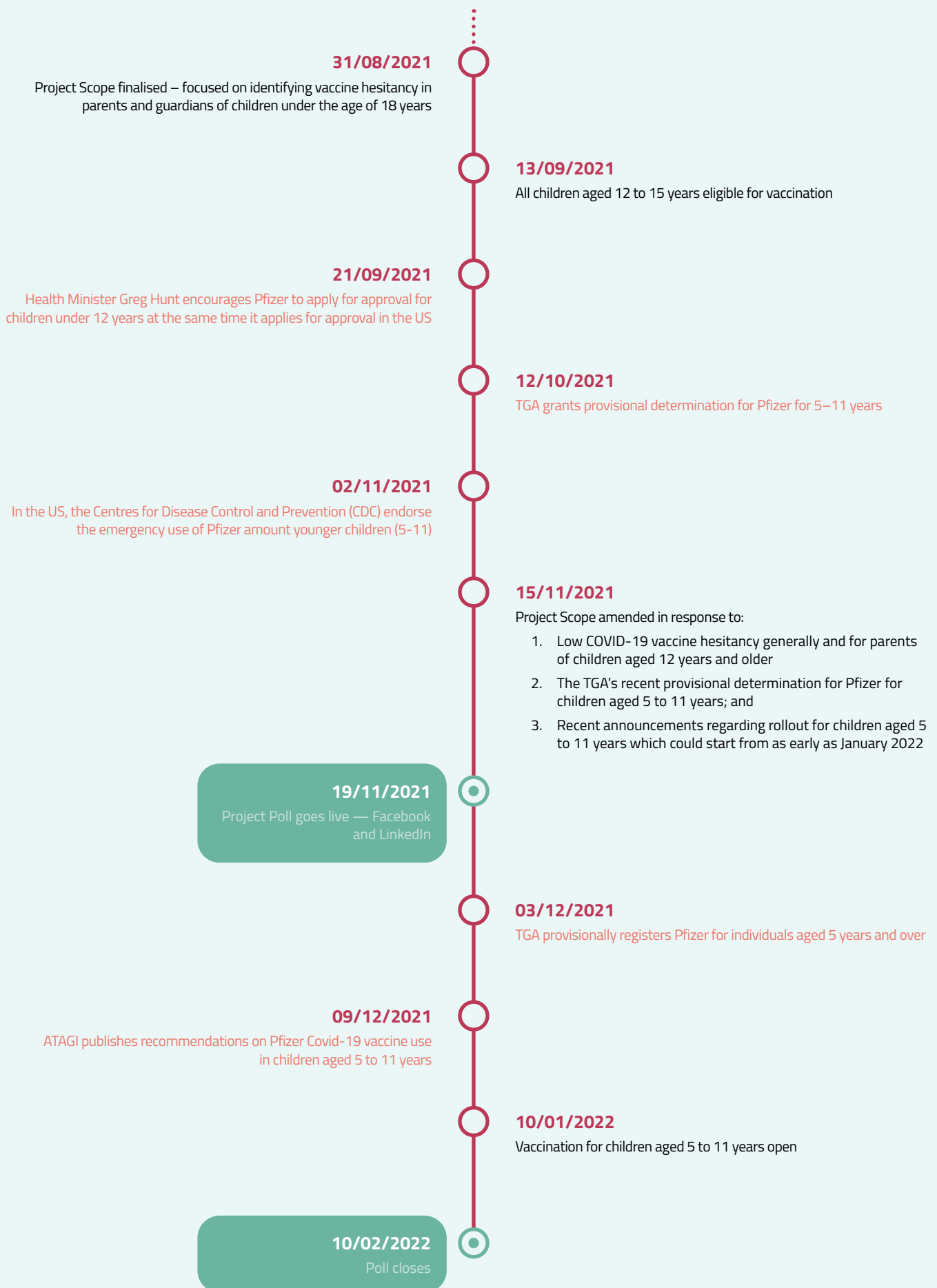
- Parents, guardians and carers in respect to their children and adolescents
- The Barwon South West Public Health Unit (Project Champion)
- General practitioners, medical specialists, nurse immunisers and other healthcare professionals
- The wider community of the Barwon region which has an interest in Australia's borders remaining open

A Dynamic Environment

From project commencement, the Project Team faced many challenges as a result of an ever changing landscape. This included the continual flow of emerging evidence (internationally and nationally), the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, community outbreaks of COVID-19, emerging variants and the introduction and refinement of policy and mandates.

The milestones below were documented by the Project Team to illustrate the dynamic environment the project operated within:







A Revised Project Scope

The Barwon region has been the fastest growing region in Victoria.

A key objective of the project is to support Barwon Health in providing parents and guardians within the Barwon region with access to trusted and accurate information to support decision making regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

It is hoped such access will translate into wider benefits to the Barwon region, including (but not limited to):

- Decreased COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy amongst parents and guardians, leading to high COVID-19 vaccination rates
- A thriving community as schools, sporting clubs, local businesses and industries are able to operate at pre-pandemic function
- A thriving and sustainable tourism economy, with locals and visitors feeling safe and comfortable to reside and vacation in the region, related to high COVID-19 vaccination rates

In mid 2021, the Project Team and Barwon Health focused on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy of parents and guardians of all children aged between 12 to 18 years of age. At the time it was anticipated the rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine for this cohort would be from late 2021 and into early 2022.

Rapid evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the arrival of the Omicron COVID-19 variant to Australia in November 2021, resulted in quicker than expected changes to the eligibility for vaccination and the vaccines approved. An important factor which became increasingly evident was that the COVID-19 vaccination rate of children aged 12 years and over in the Barwon region and statewide was high, indicative of low vaccine hesitancy.

The Project Team therefore made an evidence based decision, following consultation with Barwon Health and the Committee for Geelong, to further refine the project scope to include only parents and guardians of children aged 5 to 11 years. Again, at the time it was considered unlikely that this cohort would receive provisional registration for a COVID-19 vaccine from the TGA until at least early 2022.

Project Poll Development

It is important to note that other data obtained and analysed regarding the current levels of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in adults in the Barwon region, indicated Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (“CALD”) groups as having the lowest levels of vaccination within the community.

In response, much of the work undertaken to address vaccine hesitancy within CALD groups has been implemented as a result of the combined efforts of Barwon Health and Diversitat. Additionally, a strong collaboration with Barwon Health and the Wathaurong Health Services Clinic has also assisted.

To gain a broad view of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in parents and guardians of children aged between 5 to 11 years in the Barwon region, the anonymous and online Project Poll was created to obtain data on various opinions and beliefs.

The Project Poll was written in a neutral tone to allow for all expressed opinions, whether in support or against COVID-19 vaccination. The Project Team identified it was important to convey that the poll was designed to seek and understand the views of all parents, guardians and carers of all children in the relevant age cohort, to obtain insights to inform the Barwon region leaders of the community’s views and needs.

A draft of all poll questions was developed to pinpoint the following targeted information, which could then be shared with Barwon Health to further assist in the COVID-19 vaccination roll out for children aged between 5 and 11 years, including:

- Postcodes of respondents
- Whether the respondent identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Whether the respondent was feeling hesitant for their child or children aged 5 to 11 years to receive a COVID-19 vaccine
- Whether the respondent would provide consent for their child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine
- Reasons for any vaccine hesitancy
- Sources of information which assisted in decision making to provide consent for the COVID-19 vaccine
- Ranking of the most trustworthy and influential resources identified
- Accessibility of vaccination (preferred access method)
- Access difficulty

Prior to the Project Poll going live it was submitted to Barwon Health for comment. Barwon Health sought review of the proposed poll questions from professionals within the public health sector as well Deakin University (behavioural research), who confirmed the poll was fit for purpose.

The Project Poll went live on 19 November 2021, following the TGA's provisional determination of the Pfizer vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years and the Federal Government's announcement regarding vaccine rollout from January 2022.

Though scheduled to close on 10 January 2022, the Project Poll was extended by an additional month to 10 February 2022 in acknowledgment of two additional factors which may have changed vaccination sentiment; the peak of the Omicron COVID-19 variant (early to mid January 2022) and the impending return to school for students, recognising that in December most cases were still attributable to the Delta variant.

The Project Poll was shared on the Project Team members Facebook and LinkedIn platforms and was also shared by the Committee for Geelong in its newsletter and LinkedIn profile.

One of the limitations of the Poll was getting school principal engagement with identified schools in low vaccination areas given the timing of the poll leading into the end of the school year and the commencement of the summer holidays.

Notably, the Victorian State Government (Department of Health) also recently launched the first state-wide survey of parent, guardian and carer views in relation to COVID-19 vaccination for children aged 5 to 11 years of age. The survey was live from 3 to 17 March 2022, the results of which are yet to be released publicly, and therefore unfortunately unable to be cross-referenced with the results from the Project Poll.

Project Poll Results, Limitations and Key Insights

Participation and Limitation on Data

Over a period of approximately 12 weeks, the Project Poll was completed by 150 respondents from 20 different postcodes across the Barwon region, representing parents and guardians.

Figure 2: Participant Postcodes



Unfortunately, nil responses were received from parents or guardians from the 3214 postcode (Corio/ Norlane/North Shore) which had been identified as a target area due to lower COVID-19 vaccination rates within the adult population. A large percentage of the respondents aligned to the 3216 (18%) and 3226 (16%) postcodes.

Further, whilst it was hoped responses would be received from a diverse representation of the Barwon region, the poll results lacked cultural diversity and only one respondent identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, a notable limitation to the data collected.

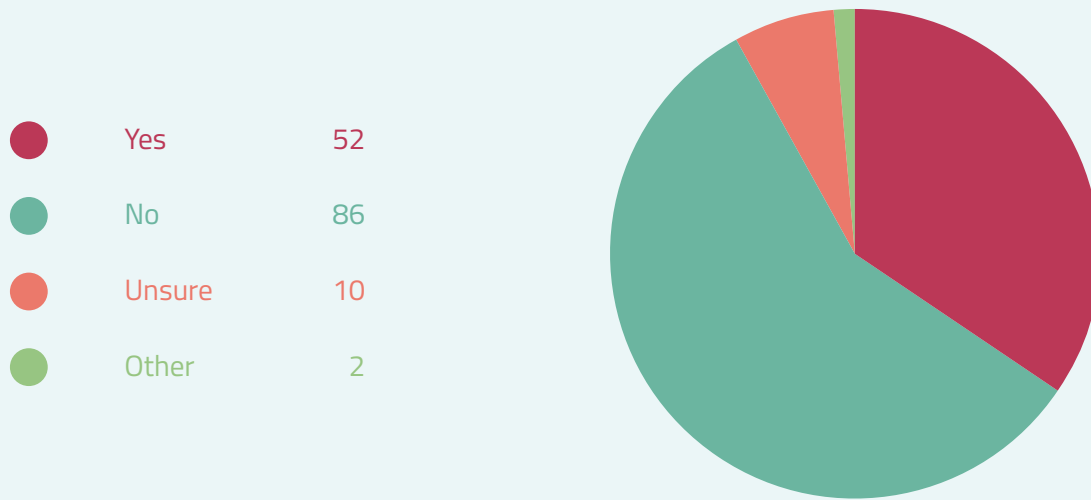
Hesitancy (Q3)

Just over one-third (35%) of respondents indicated that they were hesitant, though more than half of respondents were not hesitant (57%).

The responses to this question are considered consistent with anecdotal evidence which the Project Team gleaned from discussions with Barwon Health, family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances, related to COVID-19 vaccination of children aged 5 to 11 years.

Figure 3: Hesitancy

Are you feeling hesitant for your child or children aged 5–11 years to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

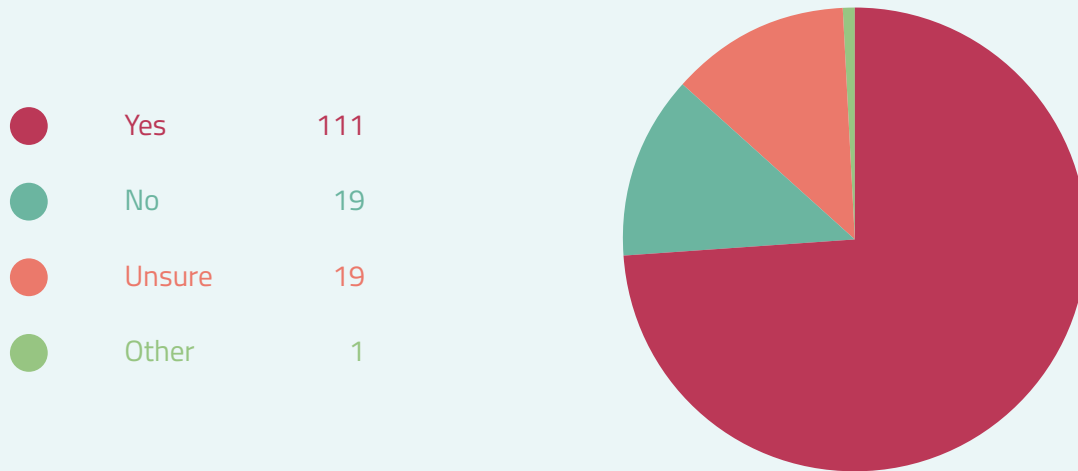


Parental Consent (Q4)

Whilst 26% of respondents identified they were hesitant or unsure, nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents responded “Yes” to this question.

Figure 4: Parental Consent

Will you be providing consent for your child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?



In November 2021, the [Melbourne Institute's Taking the Pulse of the Nation \("TTPN"\) survey](#) specifically enquired about the willingness of parents to have their children under 12 years of age vaccinated against COVID-19.

The Project Poll's percentage of consent was higher than the 65% of respondents from the TTPN survey who indicated they would be likely to vaccinate their children. Additionally, the percentage of Project Poll respondents who would not ("No") provide consent was 12%, which was lower than the rate of 17% ("Unlikely") received in the TTPN Survey.

The Project Poll's high response rate of 74% suggests the drive to support strong community outcomes is stronger than any hesitancy being experienced, while also likely positively correlating to higher case numbers across Victoria during the lead-up to the Project Poll. This correlation is also observed in the [Melbourne Institute's Vaccine Hesitancy Tracker](#), which notes hesitancy is highest in states that have experienced fewer cases of COVID-19.

Australia's historical strong support of child vaccination is also considered influential in providing consent. Feedback received to this question of the Project Poll suggests that COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy is lower in the Barwon region (certainly for older children) than for hesitancy under the Victorian immunisation schedule. Specifically, [current data](#) (as at April 2022) for the Barwon - West region shows that over 95% of people aged 16 and over are fully vaccinated (two doses) and over 71% have had more than two doses (similarly, see Figure 5: COVID-19 Vaccine Rates for 12 years and over (Third Dose)).

By contrast, currently overall vaccine uptake for children aged 5 to 11 years remains lower than any other age cohort (see [COVID-19 Vaccine Rates for 5 to 11 Year Olds](#) for up to date data), noting though that vaccination for this cohort recently commenced in January 2022, with an eight week interval period between doses (see Figure 6: COVID-19 Vaccine Rates for 5 to 11 Years (2nd Dose) and Figure 7: Current Vaccination Levels by Jurisdiction).

Contrasting the responses to Q3 and Q4, it could be said that overall despite hesitancy of parents and guardians, consent is still likely to be provided for their child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

Figure 5: COVID-19 Vaccine Rates for 12 years and over Weekly COVID-19 vaccine data | Coronavirus Victoria Third Dose

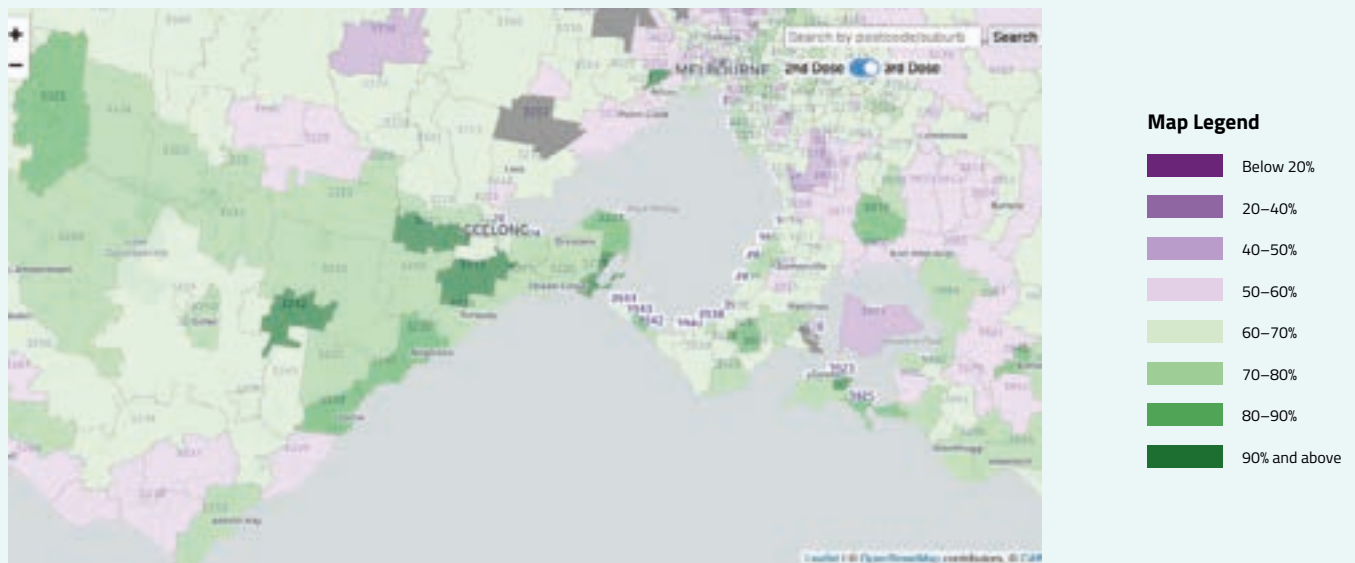
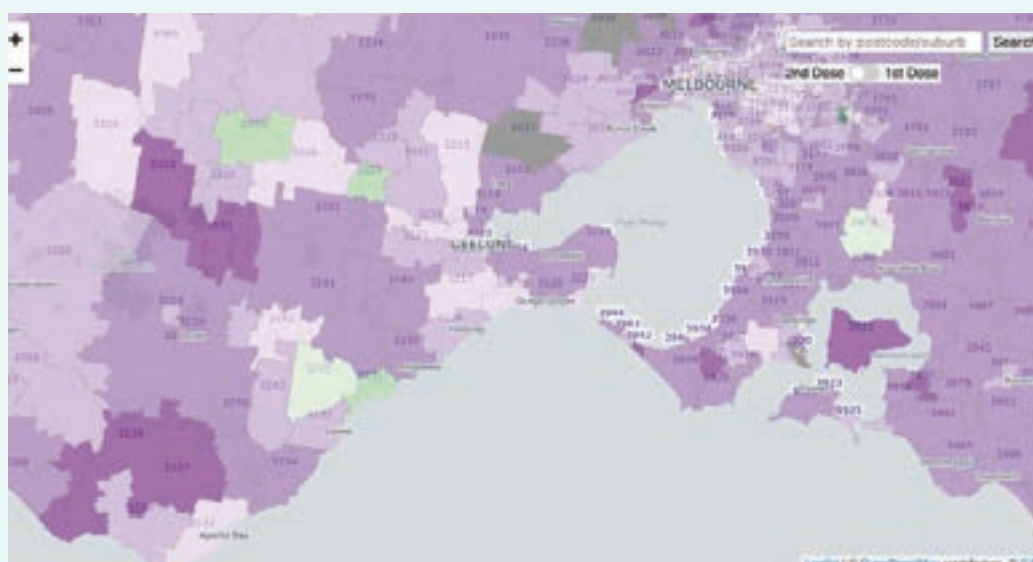


Figure 6: COVID-19 Vaccine Rates for 5 to 11 Years Weekly COVID-19 vaccine data | Coronavirus Victoria Second Dose



Above map data correct as at 7/05/2022

Figure 7: Current Vaccination Levels by Jurisdiction

Current vaccination levels by jurisdiction

Showing the percentage of the 16+ and 12+ populations with two doses of a vaccine, first and second doses for the 5-11 age group and booster doses for the 18+ population. Last updated 12 April 2022.

State	16+ second dose %	12+ second dose %	5-11 second dose %	5-11 first dose %	Booster 18+ %
NSW	94.63	93.78	31.53	49.81	61.08
VIC	93.71	93.26	35.21	56.36	65.87
QLD	91.88	90.64	27.37	43.74	55.05
WA	97.04	96.03	31.95	57.51	75.01
SA	93.02	92.21	36.23	56.59	64.19
TAS	98.63	97.74	47.86	63.98	67.39
NT	88.66	87.77	28.77	53.35	61.2
ACT	100.61	100.75	60.79	80.21	76.45
AUS	95.29	94.44	32.9	52.65	65.61

Guardian graphic | Source: Department of Health, Ken Ising, Guardian Australia analysis

Reasons for Hesitancy (Q5)

If you have any hesitancy, please select below the reasons why you are feeling most hesitant about your child or children receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. You can select more than one reason.

“Vaccine safety” was the most common response selected by more than one-third (37%) of respondents.

Closely following was “vaccine effectiveness” and “mixed messaging about COVID-19” which were identified by approximately 14% of respondents.

“Distrust of the Australian Government” and “vaccination seen as a personal choice” were the other two options which were selected by approximately 12% of respondents.

Various comments were received in the open comments section, which have been captured verbatim at Figure 8: Reasons for Hesitancy below.

Figure 8: Reasons for Hesitancy

Positive Comments

Already jabbed

No I feel fully informed.

I can't wait to know that my child is helping the community stay safe. He is only 5 but we have discussed the importance of the vaccine and is looking forward to it. I know all parents don't feel the same way but we can't wait for the vaccination to be available for 5–11 year olds.

people should listen to the science and the evidence

It's essential so we can travel with our family and feel protected.

I am eager for the vaccine to be available asap

I am sure that this has been thought of but to get a good understanding, this survey needs to be directly sent to communities who may be challenged in some way, be it socially, economically, language, culture, gender, etc.

Concerns and Suggestions

Anxiety in children about having a needle is the biggest concern. Refusal to go.

Greater information on safety of vaccines in children and also risk of side effects vs benefit

Providing risk info in easy to digest format is important. It's easy for people to worry about the risks. But we often don't have both sides of the equation and trade off between risks. I think this would help parents with uncertainty about vaccination for young people.

Which of the vaccines will be available for children?

Media. In times of pandemic, factual evidence should be a priority over sensationalism.

A big factor in deciding to get the kids vaccinated is the fact they're currently put at risk by antivaxx adults – if more adults were vaccinated I would reconsider.

GP consults for consent

Where are the long term clinical trials?

Education campaign on safety of vaccine in children based on scientific studies

National and international statistics for illness and death in children rather than transmission death in elderly.

I keep hearing stuff about infertility in later years for these kids. (I know it's rubbish but a little bit of that stays in the corner of my mind to give me parent guilt.

Governments considering before acting. The constant changing of rules was unsettled and created concern for the safety of the vaccine generally.

Vaccination should be a choice, especially given the lack of data around the COVID-19 vaccine, especially for children. And in particular given the prevalence of myocarditis and pericarditis in younger males.

Would rather find out that kids under 5 are eligible from health than find out in media.

The assumption that questioning vaccine safety is somehow related to ignorance when research is showing mmr vaccines potentially reprogram innate immune responses and may make us more susceptible to fungal infections etc

I have more concern for my nearly 5 yr old daughter than my two older boys (8, 11), mainly because it is untested in this age group. Maybe 1–2 years down the track I would likely have less hesitancy. Thank you.

With the increased risk of myocarditis or pericarditis in young males, I am concerned that giving the vaccine especially now when Omicron is on the horizon and may signal the end of the pandemic, I don't know if I want to go ahead with this. Please note, my wife and I are both fully vaccinated, so it's not that we are resistant to having the vaccine, just these health concerns are a big factor for us.

More information about getting it done. Bookings were to open 15 Dec and you could only select 12+ on 15 Dec. 16 Dec jumped on and there is no-where available to book for this age group – tried 5 different postcodes including 3000 and no availability.

Hesitancy or Anti Vax Comments

No chance my child will be vaccinated.

I do not agree with children being vaccinated with a trial vaccine for something that does not even make them sick.

By intensive research, discussions from experts are puns the world, under no circumstances should children be vaccinated at such a young age for Covid-19.

It blows my mind that you would vaccinated children for C-19. I am an academic and there is more potential harm than benefit to do this. Non-sensical.

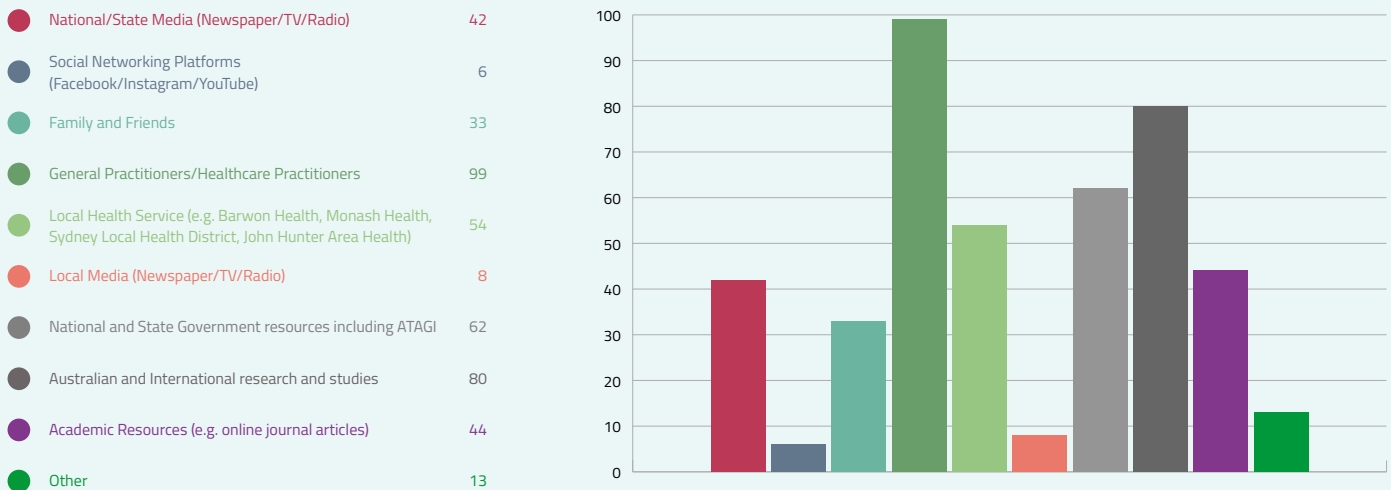
Needs more research on long term side effects before children are exposed.

Trusted Sources (Q6 and Q7)

What sources of information have helped or will help you in making your decision whether to provide consent for your child or children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and why? You can select more than one.

“General Practitioners/Healthcare Practitioners” are seen as the most trusted sources of information according to 66% of respondents. Trust of local sources, primarily general practitioners and Government departments was evidenced by the open comments on this topic, captured verbatim at Figure 9: Trusted Sources below.

Figure 9: Trusted Sources in Decision Making

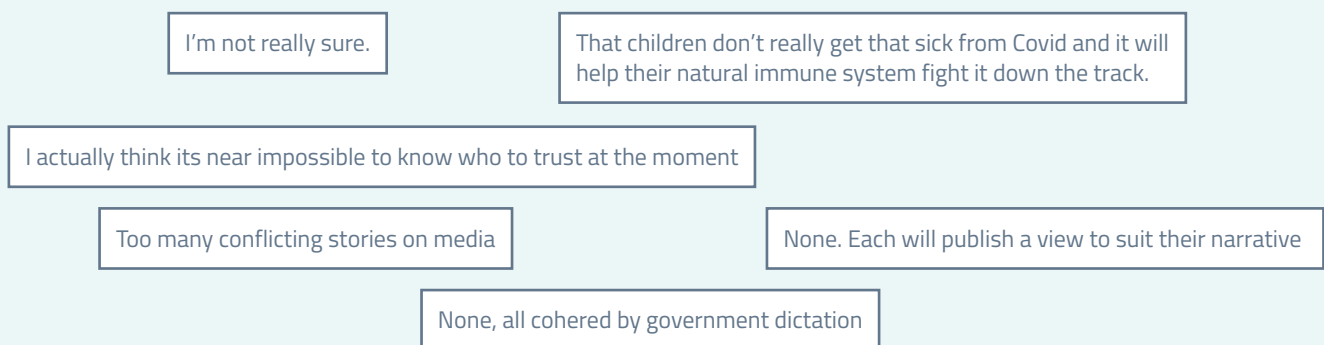


“Australian and International Research and Studies” and “National and State Government resources including ATAGI” were favoured by 53% of respondents, followed by “Local Health Service” (e.g. Barwon Health) at 36%.

There was a small percentage of free text comments which highlighted that, while reflecting a small percentage of respondents, there is concern about conflicting information and trust.

Figure 10: Conflicting Information and Trust

Trustworthy and Influential Sources Additional Responses



Preferred Access Method (Q8)

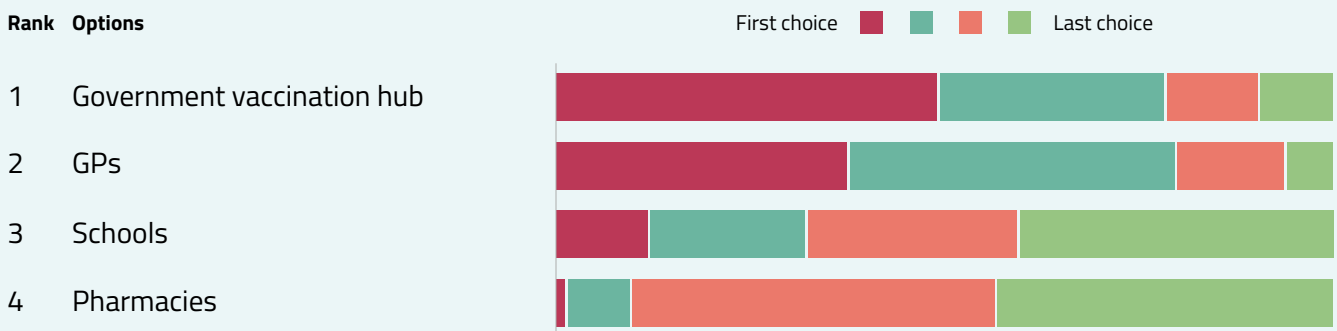
Government vaccination hubs and general practitioners were ranked as top preferences for accessing a COVID-19 vaccination (49% and 38% respectively).

This is likely attributable in part to the State Government's commitment to creating family friendly vaccination centres through the Enchanted Forest of Protection initiative. The preference for General Practitioners also highlights the importance of trust inherent in the doctor-patient relationship.

An unexpected result was that schools ranked higher than pharmacies. It is hypothesised that this finding could be a result of the pharmacy environment not being "child-friendly" or "trusted" enough (in the sense attributable to general practitioners). It is also possible there is a lack of awareness of the skills and experience of pharmacy staff to administer vaccinations.

Figure 11: Preferred Access

If your child or children will receive a COVID-19 vaccination, where would you most like your child or children to be vaccinated? (Rank in order of most to least likely)



Access Difficulties (Q9)

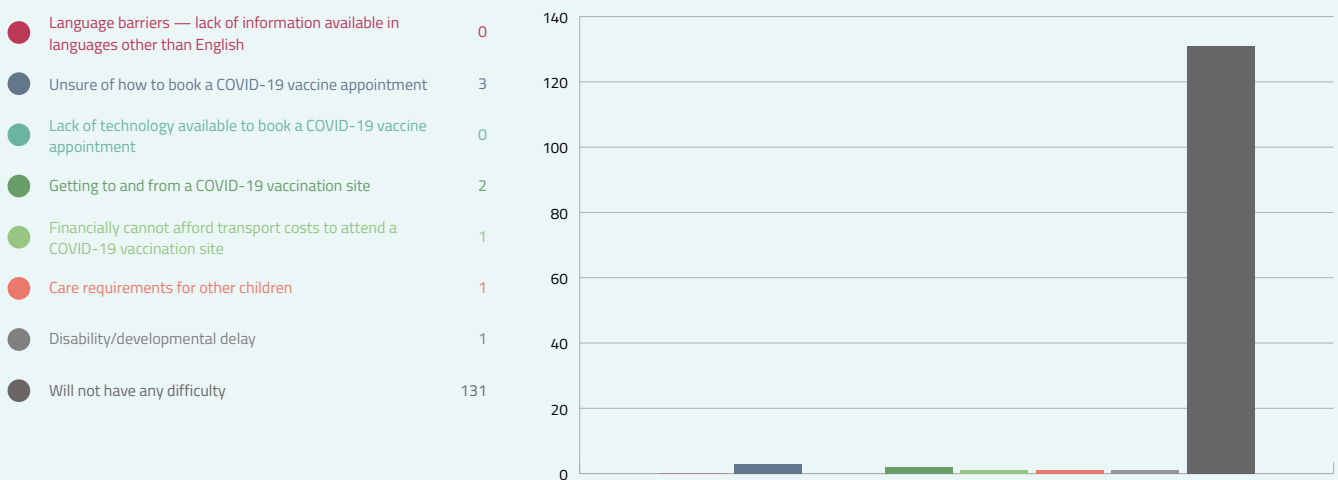
**Will you or are you likely to have any difficulties in accessing a COVID-19 vaccine for your child or children?
You can select more than one reason.**

Access was largely considered a non-issue by respondents (87% reported no difficulty).

The responses indicate an even spread of other reasons for experiencing difficulty in accessing a COVID-19 vaccine (e.g. unsure how to book an appointment, getting to and from a vaccination site, cost of transport, care requirements for others, disability).

The strong response that access was considered a non-issue is perceived to be reflective of the high profile of the local Ford Factory Vaccination Hub.

Figure 12: Access Difficulties



Recommendations

Based on initial poll results, the Project Team were able to recommend in “real time” to Barwon Health that the use of the State Government vaccination hub at Ford Factory be continued. This was timely information in the weeks prior to Christmas 2021, as there had been some broad preliminary discussions considering the movement away from the Ford Factory model.

Additionally, the initial poll results which indicated a preference for vaccinations at school was also shared and the Roslyn Primary School hosted a pop-up vaccination clinic in February 2022.

The poll results were also shared with the Victorian Association for Children with Disability in both December and January as “snapshots” in time to enable any early learnings.

Based on the poll results summarised above, cross-referenced with related and available data and research conducted internationally and nationally, the Project Team recommends the following for further consideration:

Distribution of Information

- Consider the mode and location of the distribution of information; targeting of general practitioners and healthcare providers to assist in disseminating information through mixed media (e.g. emails, text messages, paper handouts)
- Consider refresher media given the drop off of vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11 year and use of reminders for second doses, particularly in relation to COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness
- Promote percentage complete data often - strong desire of people in the region to “do the right thing” and support great community outcomes
- Promote significant International and Australian research findings via Barwon Health resources

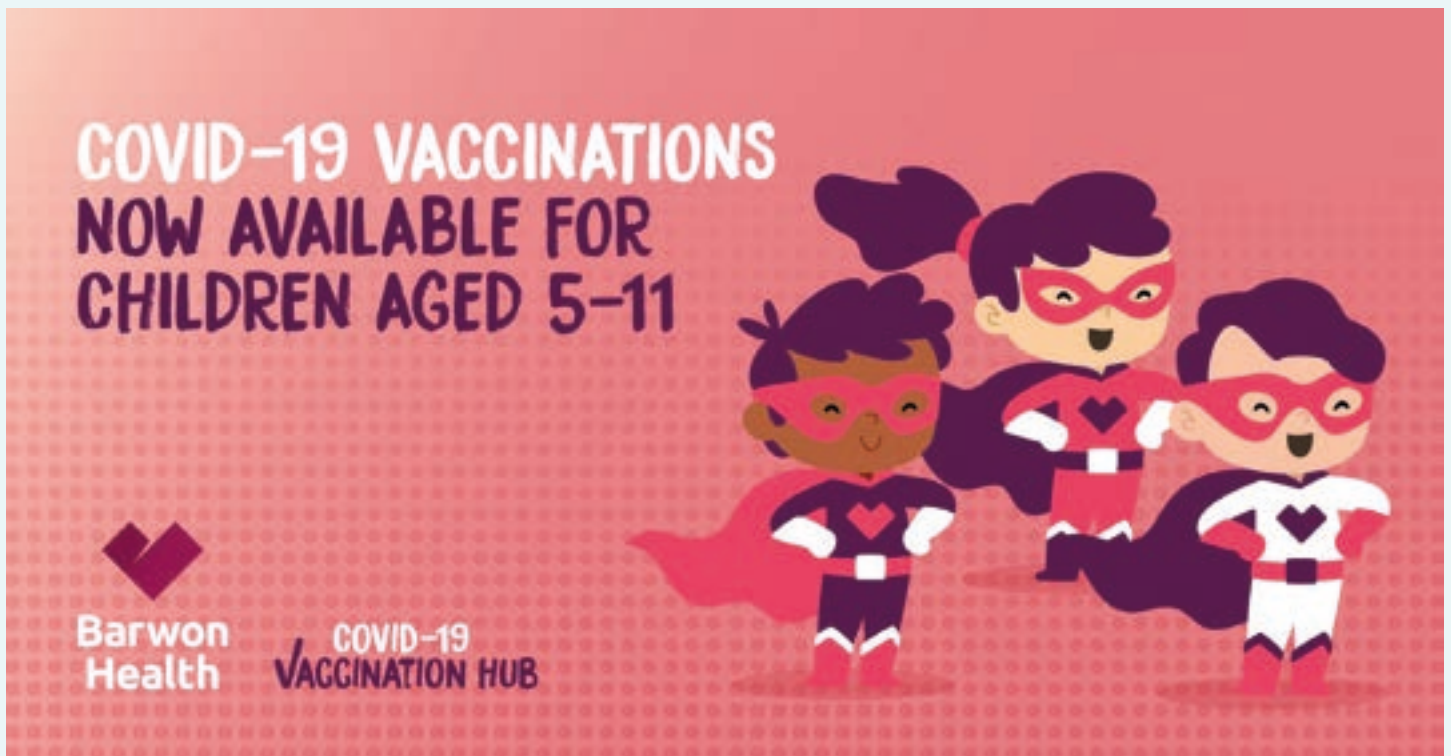
Access to COVID-19 vaccines

- Continue to utilise State Government vaccination hubs and consider their role in general vaccination programs for children
- Ensure consideration of the venue environment; the location must be welcoming both to parents, guardians and children and/or in the alternative, there must be a trusting relationship already established (e.g. general practitioners)
- If uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations at pharmacies is desired, reconsider the communication and messaging required to incentivise vaccination
- Monitor success of any pop-ups at child friendly locations, for example, the Museum of Play and Art (MOPA) to determine the value of use in future vaccination programs
- Identify opportunities for pop-ups at schools where vaccination levels are low
- Pending international and national decisions on future COVID-19 vaccine approvals for age groups 2 to 5 years and 6 months to 2 years, these cohorts present an added opportunity for leveraging the National Immunisation Program Schedule for these ages as well as family friendly options at general medical practices, the Ford Factory and pharmacies

Whilst this project specifically considered vaccine hesitancy in parents and guardians of children aged between 5 and 11 years, the Project Team considers there are transferable learnings which can be gleaned from the poll data and other research generally. It is not expected the two remaining cohorts for children (6 months to 2 years and 2 years to 4 years) will be approved in Australia for a COVID-19 vaccine within the coming weeks or months.

Pfizer announced in February 2022 that it was delaying the application process for an emergency use authorization for the vaccine for children aged 6 months to 4 years, and was gathering more information on two and three doses of the vaccine first.

The Project Team recommends in the event that the TGA and ATAGI approve the use of a COVID-19 vaccine for these age cohorts in alignment with the National Immunisation Program Schedule, that Barwon Health continue to explore the continued use of the State Government vaccination hub at Ford Factory, or similar options, to complement the trusted services provided by general practitioners and other healthcare providers and to build on overall health literacy as part of childrens' immunisation program.



Project Challenges

The most obvious challenge the Project Team encountered was working on a project focused on a key issue arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, within the pandemic, specifically:

- Project conducted in “real time”
- Rapidly changing public health policies, political environment and public opinion
- Working alongside the Barwon region’s key organisation responsible for managing the pandemic response
- International public health response heavily influential on the pace at which Australia’s response to the pandemic evolved
- Data was/is emerging as developments occurred, or was not yet available for further reporting (both internationally and nationally)

As highlighted above, after a number of early initiatives being explored for the 15 years and over age cohort, the Project Team identified that the project could best support the decision making of parents and guardians for children aged between 5 to 11 years. This is because it was the last cohort (to date) identified for rollout as an eligible age group for a COVID-19 vaccine worldwide, with the least vaccination uptake.

A further personal challenge for each member of the Project Team was navigating their own “pandemic fatigue” during times where there was an escalation of COVID-19 developments and therefore little reprieve from this all-consuming topic.

Additionally, the Project Team also had to be cognisant of online safety given the distribution of the poll across social media platforms and the potential for adverse responses from either pro or anti-vaccination sentiments, given this often highly emotive topic.

Conclusion

The Project Team are proud to have had the opportunity to support our local Barwon region community by providing local community sentiment to Barwon Health via the Project Poll conducted, particularly in such a dynamic and fast moving COVID-19 environment.

Despite the uncertainty at the time, the Project Team remains confident the decision to revise the scope of the project to target parents and guardians of children aged between 5 to 11 years was correct, to provide the most useful and relevant qualitative data to Barwon Health.

The Project Team again acknowledge and thank the 150 parents and guardians who completed the poll and provided invaluable insight into local opinion, without whom this project would not have been able to be achieved.

We hope that the findings of the project can be used to support parents and guardians of the next cohort of children under the age of 5 years, once a vaccine(s) and booster(s) are approved in the future.



Appendices

Appendix A – Official Australian COVID-19 Resources and Information

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)

Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)

TGA - COVID-19 Vaccines

TGA - COVID-19 Vaccine Safety, Monitoring and Reporting

TGA - Facebook

Australian Government | Department of Health

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder | Australian Government Department of Health

COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Children, Teens and Parents/Guardians

COVID-19 Vaccines for Children Aged 5 to 11

Australian Government Department of Health - Facebook

State Government of Victoria | Coronavirus Victoria

Victorian COVID-19 Data

Weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Data

Vaccination for Children and Teenagers | Coronavirus Victoria

Reporting Your Result

Vaccine Information for People with a Disability or Special Requirements

The Royal Childrens Hospital

COVID-19 vaccinations for five to 11 year olds: Your questions answered | Facebook

Barwon Health

Barwon Health - Facebook

Disability Support Resources

Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)

SCOPE

Our response to the coronavirus | COVID-19 Vaccinations | Covid-19 Vaccination

AMAZE

COVID-19 vaccination social scripts

Summer Foundation

COVID update

Appendix B – Media Resources

2022

Ongoing - The Guardian Australian Edition - Covid-19 vaccine Australia rollout tracker: %age of population vaccinated and vaccination rate by state | Australia news | The Guardian

Feb 2022

27th Feb 2022 - ABC Radio - Mask rules for primary school children to be reviewed at end of school term, says CHO - Mornings - ABC Radio

26 Feb 2022 - Victorian Government COVID Settings relating to Children - How we live: Information for Victorians | Coronavirus Victoria Term 1 RAT testing requirements, masks and vaccination mandates.

26th Feb 2022 - Victorian Department of Health Facebook Page - 1 year of COVID Vaccines in Victoria (more than 14 million doses have been delivered) - Facebook. In only one month, more than half of the children in Victoria aged 5 to 11 came forward to receive their first dose.

25th Feb 2022 - US Food and Drug Administration Facebook Page - U.S. Food and Drug Administration | Facebook Vaccines for under 5 in the US - Dr. Peter Marks on this week's "Just a Minute." video - Facebook

23rd Feb 2022 - Surf Coast Shire Facebook Page - Facebook 3rd dose reminder Professor Eugene Athan, Infection Disease Physician, Torquay: "I've had my third dose. A third dose is the best way to protect yourself from severe illness and hospitalisation from COVID-19"

22nd Feb 2022 - Barwon Health Facebook Page - Barwon Health - Posts | Facebook 365 days since the first COVID-19 vaccination was administered in the Barwon South West region.

18th Feb 2022 - Dan Andrews Premier of Victoria Facebook Page - Facebook Vaccination pop-ups in Scienceworks, the Melbourne Zoo, and Sea Life Aquarium – exclusively for vulnerable children and those living with a disability.

16th Feb 2022 - news.com.au / kidspot - Victorian parents to be banned from schools under new vaccine mandate - Kidspot Parents across Victoria will soon be unable to enter their children's schools unless they are triple vaccinated by March 15, prevents parents who haven't been boosted from going into schools, news.com.au.

16th Feb 2022 - Barwon Health Facebook Page - Facebook Family friendly opening hours and soft serve ice cream, will hopefully help busy families find the time to add vaccinations to their 'to-do' list.

15th Feb 2022 - ABC News QLD - After recovering from COVID, this mum thought her family was in the clear. She was wrong - ABC News When QLD's Natasha Griffin took her eldest daughter (first dose received) to hospital with severe migraines earlier this month, she was shocked to hear that her child had tested positive to COVID-19 — again.

12th Feb 2022 - SBS News - [The countries dropping their COVID-19 restrictions entirely despite the Omicron surge \(sbs.com.au\)](#) After two years of restrictions and lockdowns, and with vaccination rates rising, some countries in the north of Europe are moving to completely scrap COVID protocols imposed to keep the virus from circulating.

12th Feb 2022 - 7News.com.au - [Doctors make urgent warning to pregnant women after discovering how COVID-19 can attack the placenta | 7NEWS](#) Research published this week paints a startling picture of the destructive toll COVID-19 can take on pregnant women and their growing fetuses according to the study in the journal [Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine](#).

12th Feb 2022 - ABC News - [Victorian COVID-19 hospitalisations at 487 as state records 19 deaths and 7,224 new cases - ABC News](#)

12th Feb 2022 - SBS News - [Esther missed out on the polio vaccine. Her children won't miss their COVID jabs \(sbs.com.au\)](#) Polio survivors in Australia share their views on the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19, particularly as schools prepare to welcome children back.

9th Feb 2022 - Victorian Department of health Facebook - Facebook There's still time to get your child vaccinated against COVID-19 at Geelong - Former Ford Factory. The Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective for children five years and over.

8th Feb 2022 - Victorian Government RAT tests for Schools and early childhood via Dan Andrews Facebook page - Facebook Children aged 3 to 5 attending early childhood education in Victoria will be given two free RATs per week for voluntary testing.

8th Feb 2022 - ABC News - The Conversation - What's the difference in protection against Omicron between 2 doses and 3 doses of vaccine? (theconversation.com) Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt expects ATAGI to change the definition of "fully vaccinated" to three doses instead of two.

7th Feb 2022 - OPINION PIECE The AGE NSW - NSW COVID: Close contact rules need to change to let siblings go to school (theage.com.au) My nine-year-old daughter tested positive to COVID-19 last week. Her siblings are also now in isolation, missing school because the state's close contact rules are outdated. [If we lived in Britain](#) or the [United States](#), her siblings would still be allowed to go to school.

6th Feb 2022 - International - USA - COVID vaccines can cause minor menstrual cycle changes, researchers find : Shots - Health News : NPR A new scientific study shows that vaccination can cause changes to the timing of menstruation. But it also shows the effects are temporary, more akin to a sore arm than a serious adverse event.

3rd Feb 2022 - Daniel Andrews Facebook Page - Facebook Quick update on third doses. If you're a 16 or 17 year old, or you have one at home - from today you can now get your third dose.

3rd Feb 2022 - ABC News - ATAGI approves Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster shots for 16 and 17-year-olds - ABC News "ATAGI supports the extension of booster dose recommendations to include individuals aged 16-17 years, as an extension of previous booster recommendations for all those aged 18 years and over,"

3rd Feb 2022 - Guardian Australian Edition - International - USA - Pfizer seeks US authorization of Covid vaccine for children under five | Coronavirus | The Guardian Children under five, the last group of Americans still ineligible for vaccines against Covid-19, may soon receive emergency authorization for the shots, but getting all children vaccinated remains a serious challenge in the US. Infants under a year old are the most vulnerable of all children to severe illness.

2nd Feb 2022 - ABC News - Queensland records 16 new COVID-19 deaths, including a child aged under 10 - ABC News Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said "It's a very sad duty today to have to report our first young child that has passed away due to COVID. A young child under the age of 10,"

1st Feb 2022 - US Food and Drug Administration - Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Advisory Committee Meeting to Discuss Request for Authorization of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for Children 6 Months Through 4 Years of Age | FDA U.S. Food and Drug Administration is announcing a virtual meeting of its **Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC)** on Feb. 15 to discuss the request for emergency use authorization (EUA) of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for use in children 6 months through 4 years of age.

Jan 2022

31st Jan 2022 - Association for Children with a Disability (ACD VIC) - Association for Children with a Disability (ACD Vic) - Posts | Facebook CEO has written to the Chair of ATAGI asking that vaccine boosters for children over 12 with disability and medical conditions be put on their agenda.

29th Jan 2022 - The Guardian Australian Edition - Long Covid study finds abnormality in lungs that could explain breathlessness | Long Covid | The Guardian "It is the first study to demonstrate lung abnormalities in [people with long Covid] who are breathless and where other investigations are unremarkable,"

28th Jan 2022 - The Guardian Australian Edition - The simple numbers every government should use to fight anti-vaccine misinformation | Australia news | The Guardian

28th Jan 2022 - ABC News - TGA gives provisional approval for teen COVID-19 boosters - Mornings - ABC Radio Paediatrician and immunisation expert from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute Margie Danchin says third doses will be critical for this age group.

28th Jan 2022 - Victorian Department of Health - Facebook Get your dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can after you have made a full recovery from the acute illness, and you have finished isolating. The best protection against COVID-19 is to get your third dose, even if you've had COVID-19 before.

27th Jan 2022 - The AGE - Victoria COVID cases hit 13,755 as stats show value of vaccination (theage.com.au) Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has flagged the possibility that Australians might soon need to have a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to officially be considered immunised from the virus. .

25th Jan 2022 - Mamamia News and parenting - 12 parents on their kids going back to school. (mamamia.com.au) 12 parents share how they're feeling about the return to school

25th Jan 2022 - SBS News - Omicron may have peaked but the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, experts say. Here's what lies ahead (sbs.com.au) The Omicron wave has subsided in many parts of Australia but, experts say, it'll be another two years before life will go back to what it was before the pandemic.

25th Jan 2022 - ABC News - From 1 to 1,889,757 cases and rising: Australia's two years with COVID on our shores - ABC News So far, the pandemic has lasted **twice as long as the Spanish flu** in Australia — and there's no end in sight.

24th Jan 2022 - Diversitat - Diversitat - Posts | Facebook We ran a very successful special Children's Vaccination Clinic last week, in partnership with Barwon Health, with over 65 kids receiving their vaccination.

24th Jan 2022 - The Guardian Australian Edition - Over -12s should be able to get Covid vaccine in Australia without parental consent, say experts | Health | The Guardian Children aged 12 or over should be allowed to receive a Covid vaccine without the consent of their parents, leading ethicists and paediatricians say, while also calling for clearer national guidelines on the issue.

22nd Jan 2022 - 9 News - Coronavirus vaccine news: Boosters provide the best protection against Omicron variant, study finds (9news.com.au) Three US studies released Friday offered more evidence that COVID-19 vaccines are standing up to the Omicron variant, at least among people who received booster shots.

21st Jan 2022 - Dan Andrews Facebook Page - Facebook 149,178 other Victorian kids have got their first doses. You're all so brave, and I couldn't be prouder.

21st Jan 2022 - The Guardian Australian Edition - Australia has had its deadliest day yet of the pandemic – here's what we know about who is dying | Australia news | The Guardian There were 78 deaths reported on Tuesday alone this week. Before the current wave the highest daily death toll was in September 2020, when Victoria recorded 59 deaths.

21st Jan 2022 - news.com.au - Which booster should I get? Mix or match AstraZeneca, Moderna, Pfizer vaccine shots | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site At least of people 12 and over in Australia are fully vaccinated as of today

21st Jan 2022 - Dr Sara Marzouk - Facebook First, the paediatric vaccines do have efficacy and safety data for children aged 5-11. The results of Pfizer's phase 2-3 trial in 5 to 11 year olds, which was published in the New England Journal of Medicine in November 2021, concluded that two doses given 21 days apart was "safe, immunogenic, and efficacious". <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2116298>

20th Jan 2022 - ABC News - Calls for national face mask regulation as efficacy of cloth masks questioned - ABC News There has been discussion in recent weeks about the effectiveness of cloth masks in shielding people from spreading and catching COVID-19. In the United States, some businesses and organisations will no longer allow access to anyone wearing a cloth mask and will instead require an approved N95 respirator.

18th Jan 2022 - ABC News - Pharmacy Guild to launch website to find rapid antigen tests after 'market failure' - ABC News The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has plans to launch its own website to help people find stores stocked with rapid antigen tests after witnessing "market failure" and the competition watchdog's crackdown on price gouging.

18th Jan 2022 - Dan Andrews Facebook - Facebook Over 17% of Victorian kids aged 5-11 have now had their first dose. I think we're going to need a bigger wall.

18th Jan 2022 - Gordon Legal - My ex-partner and I disagree on whether we should vaccinate our children against COVID 19. What should I do? (gordonlegal.com.au) As children aged 5 to 11 are now eligible to receive their COVID-19 vaccine, for some parents it may be difficult to decide whether to vaccinate their children, and may be particularly problematic if both parents do not agree to have their children vaccinated.

18th Jan 2022 - News.com.au - Victoria calls 'code brown' on metro and regional hospitals as Covid cases soar | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site Victorian authorities have called a "code brown" on for all metropolitan hospitals and six major regional ones as the Omicron wave causes chaos.

17th Jan 2022 - News.com.au - TikTok video urges teens to get Covid vaccine without parents' permission | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site A Victorian government-funded youth body ' Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVIC)' has created a TikTok video encouraging teenagers to go on "vax dates" to get the Covid-19 vaccine without their parents' permission.

16th Jan 2022 - Barwon Health - Barwon Health - Posts | Facebook A guide of steps people should take when they test positive. - Isolate at home for seven days from the day you were tested.

16th Jan 2022 - Sydney Morning Herald - Australia COVID: States vow no delay in return to school (smh.com.au) NSW and Victoria are working together to devise a plan to stop another school year from being disrupted, as the federal government announced teachers and childcare workers would be exempt from isolation.

15th Jan 2022 - ABC News - Professor Catherine Bennett - Watch | Facebook Can you be reinfected with Omicron after you've had a Delta infection? How long should you wait for your booster if you've had COVID?

15th Jan 2022 - ABC News - Family law experts highlight rise in COVID-19 vaccination disagreements - ABC News Julann Tiernan from Teirnan Family Law said. "Both parents have that as a right unless there's an order by the court that changes that and gives one parent sole parental responsibility."

12th Jan 2022 - Dan Andrews Facebook - Facebook If you've got a 5-11 year old - this one's for you.

11th Jan 2022 - news.com.au - Covid vaccine for kids: Why has my child's appointment been cancelled? | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site Reports of GPs cancelling or postponing Covid vaccine appointments for five to 11-year-olds are piling up.

10th Jan 2022 - SBS News - Australia's vaccinations open to children aged 5-11 with extra help for migrant communities (sbs.com.au) Grassroots organisations will be used in migrant and refugee communities around the country as the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine becomes available for children aged five to 11.

9th Jan 2022 - news.com.au / kidspot - Govt assures Aussie families there will be no shortage of kids' COVID jabs -Kidspot Minister Greg Hunt urges families to book an appointment for their little ones, as the start of the new school year creeps up.

9th Jan 2022 - 7 news - Omicron symptoms: New COVID variant is leading to a new, but familiar, illness in kids | 7NEWS COVID-19's Omicron variant appears to be affecting children under five in a new way: a harsh, barking cough known as croup. While croup generally is not harmful, it can be frightening for parents already on edge about their babies and toddlers, too young for the COVID-19 vaccine, becoming infected with the virus.

9th Jan 2022 - Barwon Health - Barwon Health - Posts | Facebook Our younger community heroes get their chance to shine when vaccinations open tomorrow for children aged 5-11. To help make this experience as positive as possible, we can not accept walk-ins for boosters from Monday 10 January. For children with special needs, please contact Barwon Health's Disability Liaison Office who can assist you with your child's vaccination options on 0434 856 014 or DisabilityLiaisonOffice@barwonhealth.org.au

8th Jan 2022 - OPINION - Sydney Morning Herald - Kids won't be vaccinated for school, despite best efforts of GPs (smh.com.au) If you have a young child, you've no doubt tried to book an appointment for their COVID-19 vaccine, with the rollout to children aged 5 to 11 set to begin on Monday.

8th Jan 2022 - International - Sydney Morning Herald - US COVID: Hospitalisations of kids too young for vaccines soar (smh.com.au) Washington: Hospitalisations of US children under five with COVID-19 soared in recent weeks to their highest level since the pandemic began.

7th Jan 2022 - ABC News - Victorian COVID-19 hospitalisations rise to 644, as state records 21,728 cases and six deaths - ABC News Victorians will now be able to report positive at-home rapid antigen test (RAT) results online ([Reporting your result | Coronavirus Victoria](#)) as the state records 21,728 new cases and six further deaths.

6th Jan 2022 - ABC News - Most young children will be unvaccinated when they return to school during Omicron outbreak, experts warn - ABC News Educators are bracing for another “extremely difficult” year as many students return to school without sufficient protection against COVID.

6th Jan 2022 - The Age - COVID Victoria: What are the new coronavirus rules? (theage.com.au) The Victorian government has announced changes to a number of health rules to contain the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The measures come into effect at 11.59pm on Thursday night January 6.

6th Jan 2022 - The Age - Victoria COVID: Pandemic of the youth: 20-somethings make up 40% of state's COVID cases (theage.com.au) About one in 50 people in the general population are believed to be infected.

5th Jan 2022 - Dan Andrews Facebook - Facebook From today, Victorian kids aged 5-11 can get booked in for a COVID-19 vaccine at state centres.

5th Jan 2022 - Geelong Community Information Facebook - Geelong Community Information | Summary of the circus that is covid testing | Facebook You DO NOT need to have a PCR following a Rapid test. You will not need to have a Test prior to hospital Admission , you will have one whilst there. (more info on when this will begin to come) All states will be moving away from needing a RAT test prior to travel (except WA)

5th Jan 2022 - INTERNATIONAL The Sydney Morning Herald - Joe Biden urges schools to stay open despite one million US COVID cases a day (smh.com.au) Washington: US President Joe Biden has told schools they should remain open after thousands of classrooms shut down just as students were due to return and the nation recorded more than 1 million COVID cases in one day.

4th Jan 2022 - Australian Government Department of Health - Facebook COVID-19 Vaccination Children aged 5 to 11 years can now receive their free COVID-19 vaccine. Book now at [australia.gov.au](#)

3rd Jan 2022 - news.com.au - Omicron symptoms explained, what to look for, testing | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site Covid-19 cases are surging across the nation and the Omicron variant is largely responsible.

1st Jan 2022 - SBS News - Immunocompromised people in Australia 'maddened' by narrowed close contact definition (sbs.com.au) Chris Lh and his wife Diana have been bursting into tears before they go to sleep at night. Mr Lh's four-year-old son, Matt, is immunocompromised and unlike other children his age, he can't step out of his house and play with friends, go to daycare, or catch up with extended family for Christmas.

2021

Dec 2021

31st Dec 2021 - The Age - School holidays should be extended in Victoria, so students can book and receive their COVID-19 vaccination after January 10 (theage.com.au) School holidays should be extended by a week allowing more children aged five to 11 to be vaccinated before classes resume on January 31, the Victorian president of the Australian Medical Association says.

28th Dec 2021 - Victorian Department of Health - Facebook You can now book the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for 5 to 11-year-olds at your local GP and pharmacy: <https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/booking>
By vaccinating your little ones, you're helping to: Keep schools open, so kids can have more face-to-face learning and playtime with their friends Reduce the spread of COVID-19 Protect them from getting sick from COVID-19

Available at Victorian GPs, pharmacies, Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations and family-friendly vaccination centres from January 2022.

15th Dec 2021 - Wathaurong Aboriginal Co op - Wathaurong Aboriginal Co Op - Posts | Facebook Hey you mob, you might have already heard that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved the COVID-19 vaccine as safe and effective for use among 5 to 11-year-old children in Australia. As we have since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative will be working closely with Barwon Health and other health organisations to ensure that our kids can receive the COVID-19 vaccine in a safe and culturally friendly environment.

5th Dec 2021 - ABC News - Therapeutic Goods Administration provisionally approves Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for ages 5-11 - ABC News Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has provisionally approved the Pfizer vaccine for children between five and 11 years of age. Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt said the government expected to begin the rollout of the vaccine to the age group from January 10, once it was approved by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

2nd Dec 2021 - The Conversation - No, we shouldn't worry too much about getting COVID from young kids (theconversation.com) Very high vaccination rates in Australia are ensuring community COVID transmission is decreasing. Vaccines markedly reduce severe disease and death. Our health-care systems are more able to cope because fewer new cases are requiring admission to hospital and ICU. But, children under 12 years of age aren't yet eligible for vaccination and some people are asking whether children are going to become a reservoir of infection.

Nov 2021

25th Nov 2021 - ABC News - Victoria scraps travel permit system as state hits 90pc double vaccination threshold - ABC News Victoria's travel permit system has been scrapped and some state vaccination hubs will close after the state reached its 90 per cent double vaccination target for those aged 12 and over today.

20th Nov 2021 - The Age - Child under 10 dies with COVID-19 in Victoria (theage.com.au) A Victorian child under the age of 10 has died with COVID-19, becoming the youngest person in Australia to die with the virus since the pandemic began. "The child aged under 10 years, who died with COVID-19, also had other serious comorbidities," the department said in the statement.

13th Nov 2021 - ABC News - Australia might be on its coronavirus 'honeymoon'. Singapore shows what could happen next - ABC News Many Australians are rightly looking forward to a carefree summer, as vaccination bookings across the country reach new highs. With international borders opening up this month, and daily COVID-19 cases falling, there is a whiff of normality in the spring air. However, Professor Dale Fisher, an Australian infectious diseases expert, warns that any return to normal life may be short-lived, based on the experience of countries overseas.

1st Nov 2021 - ABC News - The world has recorded 5 million COVID-19 deaths, but the real toll is likely more than double that - ABC News Nearly two years into a pandemic that continues to rage, the world has now reported its 5 millionth COVID-19 death, according to a count of global deaths maintained by Johns Hopkins University. That figure is almost equivalent to the total population of New Zealand.

Oct 2021

26th Oct 2021 - News.com.au - Cienna Knowles: 'Healthy' 19yo blames Pfizer Covid vaccine for blood clotting disorder | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site However, authorities have not confirmed her condition is connected to the Pfizer shot – which to date has not been linked to blood clotting issues as a known side effect in Australia – with NSW Health urging the public to “use credible sources of information”.

17th Oct 2021 - Association for Children with a Disability (ACD Vic) - Posts | Facebook BREAKING NEWS: Restrictions to ease from 11:59 pm Thursday 21 October. Remember students with disability who cannot learn from home can continue to attend child care, kinder or school through the staggered return to school plan.

13th Oct 2021 - Department of health Therapeutic Goods Administration - Provisional determination granted to Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine (COMIRNATY) - proposed for use in children 5-11 years of age | Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)

10th Oct 2021 - Sydney Morning Herald - Coronavirus Australia: 'If stars align', five-years-olds could get first shots by Christmas (smh.com.au) Five-year-olds in Australia could get their first COVID-19 vaccinations over the summer if Pfizer can make a compelling case that the benefits of the jab outweigh any side effects.

8th Oct 2021 - Geelong Times - Masks for Victorian schoolkids as COVID cases soar - Geelong Times (timesnewsgroup.com.au) VICTORIAN children in Grades 3 to 6 will eventually have to wear face masks to class in an effort to lower COVID-19 transmission as schools begin reopening. Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton today (Friday, October 8) confirmed the new rule as the state recorded five deaths and 1,838 new locally acquired cases of COVID-19 – the highest daily tally of any state or territory since the pandemic began.

7th Oct 2021 - Department of Health - Recommendations on the use of a 3rd primary dose of COVID-19 vaccine in individuals who are severely immunocompromised (health.gov.au) These recommendations have been prepared in consultation with the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI). ■ ATAGI recommends a 3rd primary dose of COVID-19 vaccine in severely immunocompromised populations to address the risk of suboptimal or non-response to the standard 2 dose schedule.

4th Oct 2021 - Dr Sara Marzouk - Facebook Proud of our younger generation of Victorians. The 12-15 year old cohort have refused to listen to the fear-mongering and misinformation circulating online and have lined up in droves to get vaccinated and contribute to ending this lockdown. Over 53% of them have received one dose!

3rd Oct 2021 - Geelong Community Information - Geelong Community Information | Can I give a big shoutout to the over 80% of kids aged 12, 13, 14 & 15, that have gone and already got their first dose of the covid vaccine in just th... | Facebook Can I give a big shoutout to the over 80% of kids aged 12, 13, 14 & 15, that have gone and already got their first dose of the covid vaccine in just the last 3 weeks.

2nd Oct 2021 - International - Sydney Morning Herald - US COVID: "California to mandate vaccines for schoolchildren (smh.com.au) Los Angeles: California will mandate COVID-19 vaccines for children attending school once the shots are federally approved for their age groups, becoming the first US state to require the inoculations in classrooms.

Sept 2021

21st Sept 2021 - ABC News - Kids under 12 could get Pfizer COVID vaccine before the end of the year depending on TGA application - ABC News Australian kids aged between five and 11 could get a COVID vaccine jab this year, depending on when and if Pfizer makes an application to the nation's medical regulator.

21st Sept 2021 - ABC News - Pfizer to apply for approval for COVID-19 vaccine to be used for five- to 11-year-old children - ABC News Pfizer says its COVID-19 vaccine works for children ages five to 11 and it will seek US authorisation for this age group soon.

19 Sept 2021 - Victorian Department of Health - (1) Facebook On advice from the Chief Health Officer, Greater Geelong, Mitchell Shire and the Surf Coast will enter a seven-day lockdown from 11:59 pm tonight.

Aug 2021

26th Aug 2021 - ABC News - When can my child get vaccinated against COVID? Are the vaccines safe for kids? - ABC News National Cabinet will meet today to discuss vaccinating children over 12 against COVID-19, and the Prime Minister has confirmed plans for rolling out jabs to younger Australians have been in the works for weeks.

9th Aug 2021 - Barwon Health - (1) Facebook Vaccination Update: Vaccination of adolescents aged 12–15 years From today (9 August), eligible adolescents aged 12–15 years can receive a COVID-19 vaccination. This change has been implemented following recommendation from Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) that high-risk children aged 12–15 years be prioritised for vaccination with Pfizer.

3rd Aug 2021 - Barwon Health - (1) Facebook Geelong is leading the state's COVID-19 vaccination race to fully vaccinate people over the age of 15.

25.9% of people over 15 have been fully vaccinated, with 51.4% receiving at least one dose. Our healthcare colleagues at [South West Healthcare](#) have also achieved 51.6% first dose coverage for the Warrnambool and South West region and [Bendigo Health](#) is leading the first dose race for the nation with 52.6% vaccinated

July 2021

28th Jul 2021 - Today Show 9 News - (1) TODAY - Posts | Facebook Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for children over the age of 12. So will you be letting your kids get the jab?

