

## Booster roll-out: Let's get it right

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Now is the time for Federal and States governments to develop effective plans for the administration of booster vaccinations to ensure continuing protection against COVID-19, the Consumers Health Forum says.

The recent Government announcements of a boost to the supply of COVID-19 vaccines and the approval of the Moderna vaccine by TGA are very welcome, the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"We know some countries are already commencing the administration of booster shots and that the Australian Government is expected to give the go-ahead in the next month.

"The initial delays and confusion that have clouded the rollout of the first stage of the vaccination program could and should be avoided with planning and community consultation informed by the lessons of experience.

"The initial rollout of vaccinations was complicated and problematic largely because of scarcity of supply and resulting uncertainties. That should not be the case with the boosters given the increased supply.

"Based on the experiences of some other countries, it is becoming clear that the effectiveness of the first and second rounds of vaccinations wanes: it is no surprise that consumers are asking our plans for boosters. It should be a matter of urgency that we have in place an organised approach for the booster shots.

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"We need it to be made clear to all Australians that the booster shoots will be important for many people, when it is considered that a significant number of Australians have chronic conditions that put them at increased vulnerability to COVID.

"The Grattan Institute's Professor Stephen Duckett has said that talking dismissively of people dying from COVID as having had underlying medical conditions is ethically reprehensible.

The commentary about the numbers of people dying from COVID with underlying conditions is a reminder that about 40 per cent of the population have health conditions that place them at high risk of complications from COVID.

"Anyone with underlying medical conditions should be a vaccination priority and urged to get vaccinated as soon as possible".

"Surely it would be possible and desirable with the next stage of vaccinations to ensure the most at-risk groups in the community, the aged, Indigenous Australians and all health workers are given priority" Ms Wells said.

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