

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) COVID-19 Working Group

Terms of Reference and Membership – September 2020

About this document

This document outlines the ATAGI COVID-19 Working Group's (Working Group) structure, function, roles and responsibilities.

Background

Delivery of a COVID-19 vaccine(s) is a critical and urgent need in the global and Australian response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian Government Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce has identified ATAGI as the appropriate committee for provision of evidence-based advice on immunisation policies, programs and priorities to the Minister for Health,¹ and requested ATAGI advice on the use of COVID-19 vaccines for the Australian population. The Working Group will provide advice to the Government on the effective and equitable use of COVID-19 vaccines available in Australia, as directed by the Department of Health.

Terms of Reference

ToR#	Term of Reference
1	Provide technical advice to the Minister for Health on the immunisation program for COVID vaccines as they become available in Australia.
2	Identify and prioritise gaps in the immunisation landscape to improve impact, confidence and equity with the use of COVID vaccines.
3	Advising on the content of clinical and other communication materials, including updating the Australian Immunisation Handbook for a COVID-19 vaccine/s.
4	Consult with the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) and the Advisory Committee on Vaccines (ACV) and other national committees on matters relating to the implementation of immunisation policies, procedures and vaccine safety related to COVID vaccines.
5	Other tasks as directed by the Department of Health.

¹ *Policies and procedures for the administration and governance of the ATAGI July 2019.* <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/policies-and-procedures-for-the-administration-and-governance-of-atagi>

Membership of the Working Group

The Working Group membership will consist of ATAGI members as well as additional experts invited as required to the Working Group in a temporary capacity. The Working Group will be led by an Executive Group with three Sub Groups covering the following work streams;

1. vaccine utilization and prioritisation;
2. vaccine distribution and program implementation; and
3. vaccine safety, evaluation, monitoring and confidence.

The structure of the Working Group is at Attachment A.

Operation and Reporting

Operation of the Working Group will be supported by the ATAGI Secretariat in the Immunisation Policy Section, Immunisation and Communicable Diseases Branch with technical support from the National Centre for Immunisation Surveillance and Research (NCIRS).

Provision of advice will occur on an iterative basis. The Sub Group Chairs will report to the Executive Group who will seek ATAGI comment and endorsement before providing advice to the Department of Health.

A work plan will be developed by each Sub Group encompassing tasks under their individual work streams to be endorsed by the Executive Group.

Term

The Working Group will be formed for the duration of need as defined by the Department of Health, initially 12 months.

Members Responsibilities

The Chair of the Executive Group will:

- Lead the Working Group in supporting the Minister for Health, in delivering the Working Groups Terms of Reference in collaboration with the Department of Health.
- Lead meetings, including setting the agenda and ensure decisions are clear and accountable.
- Provide leadership and ensure committee members are aware of their obligations and that the Working Group complies with its responsibilities.
- Determine when an issue should be escalated to the Department of Health.
- Seek and review conflicts of interests from members.
- Disseminate outbound Working Group actions and decisions made by the Working Group to ATAGI, by authorising correspondence and documentation via the ATAGI Secretariat.
- Represent the Working Group at meetings related to COVID-19 as required, or nominate a suitable delegate.

- Delegate their responsibilities to a deputy chair in their absence.

The Chair of each Sub Groups will:

- Lead meetings, including setting the agenda and ensure decisions are clear and accountable.
- Provide leadership and ensure committee members are aware of their obligations and that the Sub Group complies with its responsibilities.
- Determine when an issue should be escalated to the Executive Group.
- Seek and review conflicts of interests from members.
- Disseminate outbound Sub Group actions and decisions to the Executive Group, by authorising correspondence and documentation via the ATAGI Secretariat.
- Represent the Sub Group at meetings related to COVID-19 as required, or nominate a suitable delegate.

Members will:

- Members are responsible for attending and participating in all meetings and for contributing to out-of-session discussions and items.
- Before meetings, members are required to prepare by reading and commenting on relevant ATAGI papers where required.
- Members are responsible for reporting any Declarations of Interest prior to meetings.

Deed of Confidentiality and Declarations of Interest

All members of the ATAGI COVID-19 Working Group will review and sign a Deed of Confidentiality and Declaration of Interest to declare all existing or potential conflicts of interest upon accepting the Working Group membership.

If a Declaration of Interest arises during a Working Group Member's appointment, whether actual, potential or perceived, the member must notify the Chair of the Executive Group as soon as possible in writing and take such steps as the Chair may reasonably require to resolve or address the conflict.

Members must declare any declarations of interest that pertain to the *agenda* at the start of each meeting.

Correspondence

All correspondence to ATAGI should be directed to the ATAGI Secretariat at ATAGI.Secretariat@health.gov.au. The Secretariat will then forward to the responsible person/team for actioning.

Meeting schedule

Meetings will be held via video and teleconference where possible. Face to face meetings will be held as determined by physical distancing practices.

Meeting protocols

Care will be taken to schedule meetings to maximise attendance of Working Group members.

Notice of any meeting of the Executive Group and its Sub Groups shall be given in writing as soon as possible, and where possible no fewer than two working days before the day of the meeting.

The ATAGI Secretariat will arrange distribution of agenda papers and meeting outcome notes via the Working Group SharePoint page.

Working Group decision making

Decisions will be by consensus. In the event that consensus cannot be reached in a timely way, the Chair/s may ask for a decision to be voted on. When voting, a matter will require three-quarters of Members present to be in agreement in order to pass. Abstaining from the vote will be counted as disagree if there is no clear resolution from the votes cast.

Voting should not take place where quorum is not reached. On these occasions a decision should only be reached by consensus, or deferred for out of session agreement or the next meeting.

All decisions are to be recorded in the meeting outcome notes, including any relevant background information.

Document history

Version number	Finalisation date	Description / changes	Notes
v0.1		First draft version of Terms of Reference of the ATAGI COVID-19 Working Group	Tabled at 76 th ATAGI meeting August 2020 for comment.
v0.2		Second draft version of Terms of Reference of the ATAGI COVID-19 Working Group	