**Schools vaccination template letter**

**Dear colleagues**

As part of the phased COVID-19 vaccination roll out, more staff are now eligible to receive a vaccine. The vaccination rollout is occurring in phases determined by the Australian Government on advice from health experts.

The free and safe vaccines being used in Australia are very effective at preventing serious illness and loss of life from COVID-19.

Please see the information below to find out if you are eligible, and how to book an appointment.

The Department is continuing to follow the advice of the Chief Health Officer and the Department of Health to support schools in implementing appropriate health and safety measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

## Eligible staff and students

All Victorians aged 40 years and over are now eligible for vaccination.

The Department of Education and Training has been working closely with the Department of Health to clarify eligibility requirements for school staff aged under 40 years.

Currently, Victorian school staff who are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine include:

* people who are 40 years and older
* staff in Phase 1b Priority Group 1, being:
  + Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registered nurses and allied health workers in clinical and non-clinical roles in schools
* staff in Phase 1b Priority Group 2 (caregivers’ provision):
  + all teaching, support and administration employees in specialist schools directly working with students (within 1.5 metres of students for more than 15 minutes)
  + any teaching and support employees in schools, directly working with students (within 1.5 metres of students for more than 15 minutes) living with a [specified underlying medical condition](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/phase-1b#specified-underlying-medical-conditions) or significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living.
    - A significant disability in the context of vaccination of ‘carers’ in government schools would include, for example, school staff directly working with a student(s) receiving either National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) supports.

Prioritised access to vaccination for employees specified above is in recognition of the vulnerability of students living with specified medical conditions and significant disability to becoming very unwell if they become infected with COVID-19.

From 17 June 2021, it is recommended the [Pfizer](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/about-the-pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccine) vaccine be given to people under 60 years of age, the [AstraZeneca](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/about-the-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine) vaccine be given to people aged 60 years and over.

People in later phases are not eligible for vaccination at this time. The Department will provide further information about vaccine eligibility for staff aged under 40 years not included in Phase 1b when it is available.

To learn more about the Australian Government’s vaccine rollout, and to check your eligibility, visit the [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker](https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility?lang=en) .

## How to book an appointment

To book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment, refer to the [Department of Health website.](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/book-your-vaccine-appointment)

People who are [currently eligible](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/who-can-get-vaccinated) to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can book an appointment at a [vaccination centre](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccination-centres) (many vaccination centres are accepting walk-ins, others are appointment only).

Currently, walk in appointments are not available for Pfizer vaccine. Walk ins are still available at some sites for AstraZeneca vaccine.

You may have questions about a pre-existing medical condition and getting a COVID-19 vaccine. In this case, the Department of Health recommend you get your COVID-19 vaccine through your general practitioner (GP).

People who are aged over 70 are encouraged to receive their COVID-19 vaccine at their GP. Use the Australian Government’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker](https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility?lang=en) to find a nearby GP clinic offering vaccinations and book your appointment.

Many employees may also be receiving or planning to receive a flu vaccination this year, it is recommended to leave a period of 14 days between receiving the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination planning can be discussed with your immunisation provider.

### What to bring with you to your vaccine appointment

For information on what to bring to your vaccine appointment see the [Department of Health list](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/before-you-get-vaccinated-covid-19#what-to-bring-with-you-to-your-vaccine-appointment).

Individuals seeking vaccination based on their occupation as part of Phase 1b priority groups 1 and 2 must provide evidence of their eligibility.

Eligible staff should bring to their appointment:

* evidence of AHPRA registration (for nurses or allied health workers in education settings)

OR

* a letter from your employer — confirming that you are currently employed at our school, in a Phase 1B role, and Department of Health invitation to receive a vaccination. Please contact (point of contact name) to arrange this or refer to internal school (link) to download generic letter for specialist schools.
* I.D.
* Medicare card (if you have one)

### After the first appointment

Both vaccines that have been approved by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration, the Pfizer vaccine and the AstraZeneca vaccine, require two doses.

At the first appointment, you will get the first dose of the vaccine. You will then be able to book an appointment to receive your second dose. After each appointment it is important to continue to practice COVIDSafe behaviours.

The Victorian Department of Health advises that like all vaccinations, COVID-19 vaccines can have side effects. Expected side effects are generally mild and on average last a day or two. For more information on the potential side effects of COVID-19 vaccination, see the [Department of Health](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/potential-side-effects-covid-19-vaccination) website.

Flexible work arrangements and existing leave entitlement may be available [link] to support you to book a vaccine appointment and to use if you experience a reaction. These arrangements should be discussed with your principal.

We will provide further information about vaccine eligibility for staff not included in Phase 1b when available.

If you do have questions about the vaccine, please access the following resources:

* the [Victorian Government COVID-19 vaccine website](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine)
* the [Commonwealth COVID-19 vaccine website](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines).
* the Department of Health Coronavirus hotline: 1800 675 398
* the National coronavirus and COVID-19 vaccine helpline: 1800 020 080.

Thank you for your hard work.

[Principal name]