

Australia invests \$1.9B more towards COVID-19 vaccine rollout

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Australia has outlined plans to deliver Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program this year. The plan includes the announcement of an additional \$1.9 billion to go towards the COVID-19 vaccine rollout to help hospitals, GPs, and pharmacies on the frontline deliver vaccinations to everyone in Australia.

Australia has invested more than \$3.3 billion in promising vaccine candidates in four separate supply agreements. Upon Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) screening for a safe and effective vaccine, Australia will cover its whole population with equal distribution of Pfizer-BioNTech (10M doses), Oxford-AstraZeneca (53.8 million doses), Novavax (51 million doses) vaccines along with doses to be obtained from COVAX facility for its 2.5 million population. Australia has designed a calculated purchase for each phase of vaccine roll-out strategy.

TGA approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on January 25 to use on priority groups which will be subsequently extended to residents by February (for age 16 and over). Australian biopharmaceutical company CSL domestically manufactures the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. In partnership with AstraZeneca, CSL aims to make 53.8 million doses of vaccine available to Australia in the first quarter of 2021. Among which, 3.8 million doses will be delivered in early 2021 and the rest 50 million doses will be manufactured in monthly batches.

The Australian Government has also invested \$363 million to support global R&D efforts. The Government has made 2 financial commitments to Gavi's COVAX facility. COVAX has received an upfront payment of \$123.2 million to allow the purchase of over 25 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines. This would be sufficient for 50 per cent of the population to receive a 2 dose regimen. Australia has also contributed a further \$80 million to support vaccine access for up to 94 lower-income countries through the COVAX's Advanced Market Commitment (AMC).

The Australian government-supported development of its indigenous “UQ-CSL v451” COVID-19 vaccine at the University of Queensland in association with CSL. The Phase II/III study was terminated in December 2020 due to adverse immune response levels that induced HIV viral protein in trial volunteers under diagnostic conditions.