



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 Pfizer Vaccine for Children Aged 5 to 11 Years: Decision to Use

Portfolio **COVID-19 Response**

On 20 December 2021, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that New Zealand has purchased sufficient supply of the Pfizer paediatric vaccine for immunisation of the New Zealand population aged 5 to 11 years, and for the populations of the six Polynesian countries aged 5 to 11 years;
- 2 **noted** that Medsafe has granted provisional consent to Pfizer NZ Ltd for the distribution of its paediatric vaccine product in New Zealand, for children aged 5 years to 11 years, to be given as two doses at least three weeks apart;
- 3 **noted** that the provisions attached to this approval are similar to those for other COVID-19 vaccine products and relate to the ongoing provision of information regarding storage, quality assurance and safety;
- 4 **noted** that Pfizer is expected to be able to deliver its paediatric vaccine from the week beginning 3 January 2022, and that officials will work closely with Pfizer to optimise the delivery schedule;
- 5 **noted** that the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) has recommended that:
 - 5.1 the Pfizer paediatric vaccine be offered to all children aged 5 to 11 years, to be given as two doses eight weeks apart or at least three weeks apart where there is good reason for a shorter dose interval;
 - 5.2 mandates, vaccine certificates or vaccine targets must not be used for this age group, and that children should not be denied access to locations or events or be excluded based on their vaccination status;
 - 5.3 focus be given to the immunisation of Māori and Pacific children, children with high-risk pre-existing conditions, and children living with vulnerable people;
 - 5.4 focus also be given to improving access and uptake of COVID-19 vaccination and boosters in adults, other childhood immunisation in children, and strengthening public health measures in schools and other education settings;

- 5.5 careful safety monitoring be undertaken, with recommendations reviewed as data emerges from the United States and Canadian immunisation programmes for children;
- 6 **noted** that the Ministry of Health has completed a child wellbeing impact assessment, and that its findings are consistent with the CV TAG advice, including that:
- 6.1 immunisation of the wider population is important to protect children and promote their wellbeing;
- 6.2 immunisation of children adds protection and promotes children's development with or without high levels of population immunisation;
- 6.3 immunisation of tamariki Māori requires high and urgent focus – Māori have suffered high pandemic impacts, remain at high risk, and have a younger child population with 10 percent of Maori under 5 years old who are ineligible for vaccine;
- 6.4 immunisation of children should be voluntary, with no associated restrictions for any children;
- 6.5 immunisation of children should, where possible, promote whānau wellbeing;
- 7 **agreed** to use the Pfizer paediatric vaccine for immunisation of children aged 5 to 11 years in accordance with CV TAG advice where doses are to be given as two doses eight weeks apart or at least three weeks apart where there is good reason for a shorter dose interval;
- 8 **agreed** that, to promote children's wellbeing:
- 8.1 high priority be given to engagement with and resourcing for Māori to promote COVID-19 immunisation uptake for children and adults, together with access and uptake of other health and social measures that promote whanau wellbeing and the wellbeing of tamariki Māori;
- 8.2 high priority be given to the promotion of immunisation for children who are, like tamariki Māori, at higher risk of exposure to and impacts from COVID-19, including Pacific children, children with disabilities and health conditions, and children in the care of Oranga Tamariki;
- 9 **noted** that immunisation rollout for children aged 5 to 11 years is being planned to start from 17 January 2022;
- 10 **noted** that Cabinet is not scheduled to meet until 25 January 2022, and that implementation decisions may potentially be required over the shutdown period;
- 11 **authorised** the COVID-19 Ministerial Group [CAB-21-MIN-0353] to have the power to act to ensure timely decision making on the implementation of the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme should this be required during the parliamentary break;

- 12 **noted** that:
- 12.1 officials will report back to the group of Ministers with power to act over the holiday period on the implementation approach prior to opening up invitations for children aged 5 to 11 years;
 - 12.2 this will reflect the lessons learned in the initial phase of the vaccination programme and an update on the ongoing co-design process currently underway with hauora providers and iwi representatives;
- 13 **noted** that the Ministry of Health will report back to Cabinet during January 2022 on children's access to a wide range of activities and public places during the pandemic, and on any disclosure or use of immunisation records, certificates, or passports for children;
- 14 **noted** that the Secretary for Education has removed the requirement for secondary schools to maintain registers of students' vaccination status, as this is no longer required to support contact tracing and management of potential outbreaks;
- 15 **agreed** to donate up to 130,000 doses of Pfizer's paediatric vaccine to the six Polynesian countries, in line with New Zealand's Immunisation Programme;
- 16 **noted** that officials are discussing support for Fiji's immunisation of 5 to 11-year-olds with other donors and may provide further donation advice for Fiji in 2022.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet