

Appendix X

COVID-19 Vaccine Portfolio Update – 3 December 2021

Date: 3 December 2021

To: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and COVID-19 Vaccine Ministers

From: Maree Roberts, Deputy Director-General, System Strategy and Policy

Subject: COVID-19 Vaccine Portfolio Update

Purpose of report

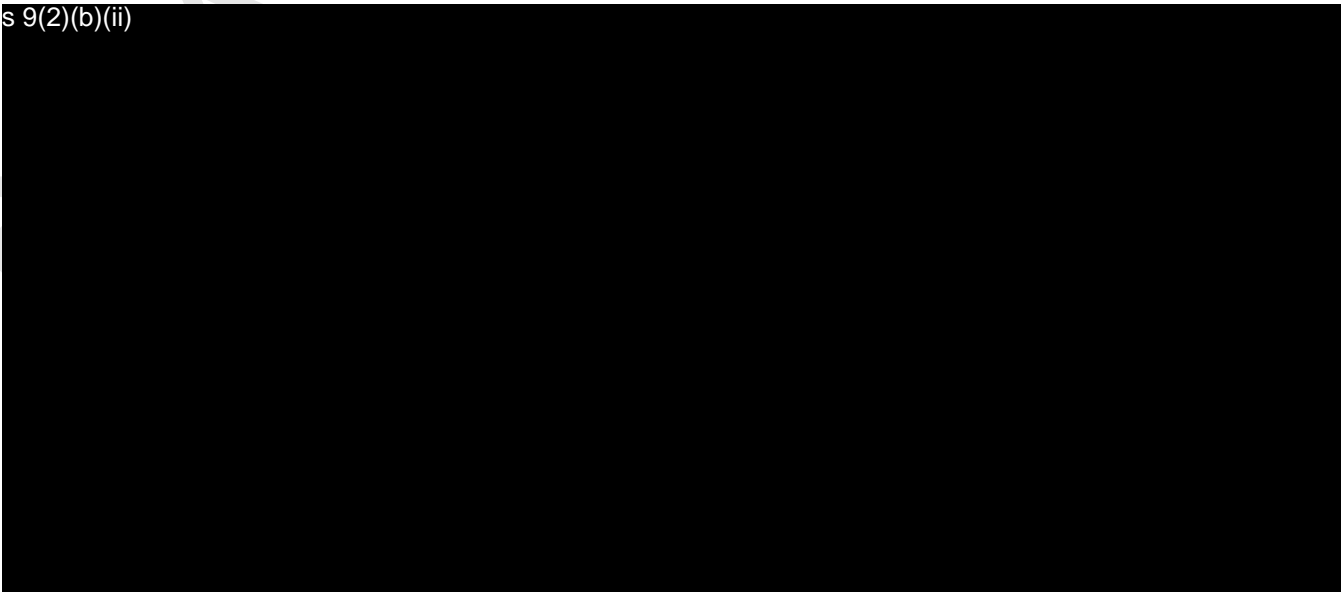
1. This memo provides an update on the COVID-19 Vaccine Portfolio, in particular with respect to the impact of the Omicron variant on the portfolio and future purchasing decisions.

Background

2. COVID-19 vaccine purchasing decisions to date have been made under the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy (Vaccine Strategy) agreed by Cabinet in May 2020. The objective of the Vaccine Strategy was to secure access to sufficient quantities of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, in order to implement a preferred immunisation programme at the earliest possible time [CAB-20-MIN-0229 refers].
3. As part of the implementation of the Vaccine Strategy, New Zealand purchased a portfolio of vaccines to manage the risk of vaccine development or supply failure. To date the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme (the Programme) has been based primarily around Pfizer's vaccine, however the portfolio continues to play a significant role in managing risk. The expected delivery schedule is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Current expected vaccine portfolio delivery schedule (in doses)

s 9(2)(b)(ii)



4. While the Programme remains primarily based around Pfizer's vaccine, the recent emergence of the Omicron variant is a reminder of the need to utilise the portfolio to manage downstream risks. It should be noted that the vaccines in our portfolio have held up well against all variants of concern to date.
5. There remains a possibility that any new variant may exhibit significant vaccine escape properties which could be a concern if the same variant is also more transmissible than previous variants. However, it will take approximately two to three weeks for lab testing to provide an indication of the potential vaccine escape properties of Omicron, and this may not fully correlate to real-world impact.
6. This paper provides an update on how each of the vaccines can be used to manage the potential risk from Omicron, as further evidence emerges on the impact of this variant.

Pfizer's vaccine remains our primary vaccine

7. Pfizer's vaccine will remain the primary vaccine in the Programme, as the focus of the programme shifts to:
 - a. ongoing improvements in uptake across New Zealand
 - b. booster doses for eligible groups people (aged 18 and above)
 - c. paediatric doses for eligible groups (aged 5-11), subject to Medsafe approval and clinical advice
 - d. ongoing support to enable Polynesia and the Realm to implement their vaccination programmes (which may include booster doses and paediatric vaccinations).
8. The current expected delivery schedule of Pfizer's vaccine (see Table 1) is likely to support our needs in the first half of 2022.
9. Pfizer is currently testing the effectiveness of its vaccine against the Omicron COVID-19 variant. Pfizer has stated publicly that if required, it could begin shipping an updated version to countries within 100 days, though how this would impact New Zealand is not yet clear. It should also be noted that such a process has not been tested in practice due to the current robustness of the vaccines already available.
10. **s 9(2)(b)(ii)**
[Redacted text]
11. Officials will progress discussions with Pfizer regarding its approach to developing an updated version of its vaccine to manage Omicron and seek to understand how this might impact New Zealand in terms of delivery timing.

Novavax's vaccine may be a useful alternative in the medium-longer term

12. As agreed in November, officials are working with Novavax to secure a small volume for delivery in Q1 2022 as a potential alternative to Pfizer's vaccine and to manage potential supply risks.

§ 9(2)(b)(ii)

13. Novavax's vaccine also provides supply options § 9(2)(b)(ii) with a submission to Medsafe to support its use as a booster (including for people that have received a primary course of Pfizer's vaccine) expected in Q1 2022.

14. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

15. Novavax has stated it is working on a version of its vaccine to target the Omicron variant.

16. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

§ 9(2)(b)(ii)

17. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

18. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

19. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

20. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

21. § 9(2)(b)(ii)

AstraZeneca and Janssen's vaccines are unlikely to mitigate the risk of new variants in New Zealand

22. Both AstraZeneca and Janssen are testing the effectiveness of their vaccines against Omicron. It is not yet known if either company intends to update its vaccine to adapt to the new variant.

23. Vaccine Ministers have recently agreed to donate 5.8 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine and 1.5 million doses of Janssen's vaccine in Q1 2022 through the COVAX Facility to support global vaccination efforts.

24. New Zealand will still have access to 1 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine and 500,000 doses of Janssen's vaccine through the portfolio. These amounts are not sufficient to provide population protection and it is not expected that these vaccines will provide superior protection against Omicron to other vaccines in the portfolio at this stage.

25. If evidence emerged to support the use of Janssen or AstraZeneca's vaccines against Omicron, officials have the close working relationships in place to support renegotiation of additional supply.

Next steps

26. Officials are utilising our relationships with current vaccine suppliers in our portfolio to understand what actions are being taken to manage the potential risk posed by Omicron and future emerging variants and will continue to advise Minister's on any options available.
27. Officials also continue to monitor the vaccine development landscape, and are considering if any additional purchases may be needed to support the vaccine portfolio. A similar approach is being taken with COVID-19 therapeutics, and we are monitoring the impact of variants on therapeutics.

PROACTIVELY RELEASED