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**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP**  
Prime Minister

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

Thursday 27 January 2022

### **NATIONAL CABINET STATEMENT**

National Cabinet met today to discuss our response to COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, approaches to test, trace, isolate and quarantine including the use of rapid antigen tests (RATs) and the vaccine rollout and booster programme.

The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, provided an update on the spread of the Omicron variant. Omicron case numbers continue to increase in Australia and globally. Omicron continues to show greater infectivity than the Delta variant, but with much less severity in terms of hospitalisations, ICU and ventilated patients.

National Cabinet noted that since the COVID-19 Rapid Test Concessional Access program began on Monday, approximately 1.4 million Rapid Antigen Tests have been distributed to eligible concession card holders through Community Pharmacies.

Since the beginning of the pandemic there have been 1,816,597 confirmed cases in Australia and, sadly, 3,402 people have died.

Globally there have been over 361.7 million cases and, sadly, over 5.6 million deaths, with 3,357,171 new cases and 9,994 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge in many countries around the world.

Lieutenant General John Frewen, DSC, AM, Coordinator General of the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce (Operation COVID Shield) provided a detailed briefing on the major expansion in Australia's vaccination roll out.

Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll out continues to expand. To date, 48 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Australia, including 82,709 doses in the previous 24 hours.

In the previous 7 days, more than 1.7 million vaccines have been administered in Australia. More than 95.5 per cent of the Australian population aged 16 years and over have now had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, including over 99 per cent of over 50 year olds.

More than 93.1 per cent of Australians aged 16 years and over are now fully vaccinated, including more than 97.8 per cent of over 50 year olds and more than 99 per cent of Australians over 70 years of age.

Over 7.1 million booster doses have been administered to over 65 per cent of eligible Australians. More than 61 per cent of Australians aged 70 years of age and over have had a booster in the last 12 weeks since the booster program commenced.

More than 34 per cent of 5-11 year olds have received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in the first 17 days of their vaccination program.

National Cabinet was briefed by the Director-General of Emergency Management Australia, Joe Buffone, on the work of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) and on supply chain arrangements and the improvements in activity as a result of the changes to close contact furlough arrangements.

National Cabinet will meet again on Friday 11 February 2022.

### **Essential Workforce**

National Cabinet noted that recent changes in isolation requirements for essential transport workers have significantly eased the pressure points for transport operators.

National Cabinet also endorsed decisions agreed by the Infrastructure and Transport National Cabinet Reform Committee on 25 January 2022, including:

- agreement in principle i) as an immediate priority, all states and territories will enact arrangements to allow New Zealand citizens to use their equivalent New Zealand heavy vehicle licence in Australia for 12 months (or until the licence expires if sooner), before being required to obtain an Australian licence; ii) the states and territories will extend equivalent arrangements to interstate (Australian) drivers to ensure Australian drivers are not disadvantaged. These measures will be a temporary COVID-19 response measure to be reviewed 12 months after implementation.
- Austroads providing an interim National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework report by February 2022 to help jurisdictions introduce a competency-based licensing framework for heavy vehicle license class progression, with the final framework due in mid-2022 following consultation on framework development and implementation arrangements.