



POLICY

Vaccination in Community Pharmacy

Position

Supporting the aims of the National Immunisation Strategy

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (the Guild) supports the National Immunisation Strategy 2019-2024, with its key priorities that include improving immunisation coverage across the population, ensuring effective governance of the National Immunisation Program (NIP), and ensuring an adequately skilled vaccination provider workforce.

To achieve the aims and priorities of the National Immunisation Strategy and to ensure patient access, convenience and choice, the Guild recommends the following actions:

- increase the range of pharmacist-administered vaccines
- increase access to the NIP for eligible populations through community pharmacy.
- ensure community pharmacies are supported, through IT system improvements, to be able to meet recording requirements for the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Support for the National Immunisation Strategy aligns with the Guild's *Centenary Strategic Plan* vision: "To embed community pharmacy as a key element in Australia's primary health infrastructure", so that we achieve "full scope of practice for pharmacists across all jurisdictions as defined by the Guild's policy position".

Vaccination in Community Pharmacy

As one of the most highly trusted and easily accessible primary healthcare providers, community pharmacies are ideally placed to supply and administer vaccines, encourage the uptake of vaccination in the community, address the concerns and dispel myths and misinformation in relation to immunisation.

The Guild has developed six advocacy resolutions supporting patient vaccination in community pharmacy:

1. The Australian Immunisation Handbook should form the basis of professional guidelines, policies and procedures for pharmacists in each state and territory.
2. Pharmacists with provisional registration (intern pharmacists) should be able to administer vaccines to patients, provided that they adhere to the state and territory legislative and regulatory requirements and are under the supervision of a pharmacist who is qualified to vaccinate.

National Secretariat



3. Patients should have access to NIP funded vaccines through community pharmacies in all states and territories. Pharmacies should be able to fully recover the costs for providing the service through government reimbursement, private fees at their discretion, or a mixture of both.
4. Vaccines listed for administration by pharmacists should be the same in all states and territories to provide consistency and equity of access to patients across the country. When an addition is made in one jurisdiction, the change should be reflected in other states and territories in due course.
5. All patient age ranges should be harmonised across states and territories.
6. Pharmacist vaccination training accredited to the Australian Pharmacy Council's (APC) *Standards for the Accreditation of Programs to support Pharmacist Administration of Vaccines*¹ which is aligned to the National Immunisation Education Framework, should be recognised as approved training across all jurisdictions to allow workforce mobility and consistency of practice.

Pharmacists vaccinating outside of the pharmacy premises

The Guild supports vaccination in community pharmacies, as they provide the most accessible health services in the community, especially in regional, rural and remote locations. Many pharmacies trade over extended hours, offering vaccination services that increase access and convenience for their communities.

Furthermore, offering vaccination services within pharmacy presents additional opportunity for individuals to engage with their pharmacist and access other health related products and services.

The Guild supports off-site vaccination services, however these vaccination services should be connected to a community pharmacy and delivered as an extension of the pharmacy's regular vaccination service, by a pharmacist engaged by the pharmacy, in an outreach model. This model ensures the outreach vaccination service is supported by a clinical governance framework and risk management principles that govern the delivery of clinical services within or from community pharmacies, and which exist to ensure public safety through consistent, safe and effective service delivery under the oversight of the pharmacy owner.

The Guild encourages community pharmacies delivering off-site vaccination services to ensure they are authorised to do so under state and territory regulations, and that they meet all requirements including maintenance of the cold chain, ensuring that appropriate emergency response protocols are in place and recording of the service, including upload to the AIR.

¹ [Standards to support administration of vaccines | Australian Pharmacy Council](#)

Background

Immunisation

Immunisation is recognised as a safe and effective way of protecting people from serious diseases. Immunisation refers to the process of both getting the vaccine and becoming immune to the disease following vaccination, which can be by injection or taking an oral vaccine.²

Immunisation has become one of the most effective public health strategies of the past 200 years and can be credited with saving countless lives around the globe.³ The World Health Organisation estimates that vaccines prevent around 2.5 million deaths world-wide each year.¹

Immunisation remains an important part of primary health care and the low rate of vaccine preventable diseases in Australia demonstrates the effectiveness of Australia's National Immunisation Strategy and the National Immunisation Program.

National Immunisation Strategy 2019-2024

The Australian Government's National Immunisation Strategy 2019-2024⁴ aims to expand and improve the National Immunisation Program. The National Immunisation Strategy is consistent with the World Health Organization's Global Vaccine Action Plan⁵. It seeks to reform the health system by encouraging a greater focus on patient health rather than illness and improving Australia's preventive health system. Its aim is to prevent disease and severe outcomes of disease by maximising immunisation coverage in people of all ages.

Some of the key priorities for the National Immunisation Strategy include improving immunisation coverage, ensuring effective governance of the NIP, ensuring secure vaccine supply and efficient use of vaccines for the NIP, and ensuring an adequately skilled vaccination provider workforce.

National Immunisation Program (NIP)

The National Immunisation Program⁶ is an established collaborative program involving the Australian Government along with state and territory governments. The strategic development and delivery of the NIP is overseen by a range of committees and advisory boards. Every year vaccines are administered to patients according to updated advice provided by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).⁷

The vaccines that a community pharmacy can administer under the NIP varies across States and Territories.⁸ All community pharmacies wishing to participate in the NIP are required to register for the program every year.

² <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/immunisation-or-vaccination-whats-the-difference>

³ World Health Organization (WHO) 2013, 'Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020, World Health Organization Geneva

⁴ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-immunisation-strategy-for-australia-2019-to-2024>

⁵ <https://www.who.int/teams/immunization-vaccines-and-biologicals/strategies/global-vaccine-action-plan>

⁶ <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-immunisation-program>

⁷ <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-technical-advisory-group-on-immunisation-atagi>

⁸ <https://www.ncirs.org.au/public/vaccines-community-pharmacy>

Vaccination within Pharmacist Scope of Practice

On 5 December 2013, the Pharmacy Board of Australia announced that vaccination was within the current scope of practice of pharmacists. This statement followed work undertaken on its behalf by the then Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework Steering Committee which involved representation from the Guild.

The Queensland Pharmacist Immunisation Pilot (QPIP) Phase 1 operated from 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014 in 80 pharmacies and saw 10,889 influenza vaccines delivered, demonstrating that community pharmacy is well placed to improve immunisation rates. Almost one in five people vaccinated in the QPIP Phase 1 trial had indicated that they would not otherwise have been vaccinated and one in seven said it was the first time they had been vaccinated for influenza. The QPIP Phase 2 trial operated from March 2015 to April 2016 and was expanded to include measles and pertussis in 200 pharmacies.

Since early 2015, appropriately trained pharmacists in South Australia, Western Australia and Northern Territory have been administering approved vaccines. Since 2016, appropriately trained pharmacists in Tasmania, ACT, NSW, QLD and Victoria have also been administering approved vaccines.

The Guild's *Scope of Practice of Community Pharmacy*⁹ strategy document asserts the role of pharmacists in reducing instances of vaccine-preventable diseases and recommends legislative enablement for pharmacists to deliver all vaccines to meet preventative care requirements for all Australians.

Influenza Vaccine

The seasonal influenza vaccine is available in all states and territories through the community pharmacy network, and it is the most frequently accessed vaccine. In the 2020 season, it has been estimated that over three million Australians nationwide received the influenza vaccine through community pharmacies.

From 2020, all states and territories have allowed pharmacists to administer the influenza vaccine to eligible people aged 10 years and over. This follows the recognition by federal, State and Territory governments that vaccination in pharmacy is safe, effective and highly accessible.

At-risk populations can access the NIP funded influenza vaccines from pharmacies in the ACT, Victoria and Western Australia¹⁰. Pharmacies are able to charge a private administration fee for the service, which is currently not remunerated by either the States or the Commonwealth.

Community Pharmacy Vaccination Services

Community pharmacies wanting to provide a vaccination service in their pharmacy need to meet specific requirements under the relevant state and territory regulation or standard. These requirements may be different in each state or territory. These requirements include standards on vaccination training, floor space, audibility to others, seating, sanitisation, and purpose of the area.¹¹

Pharmacists may vaccinate outside of the pharmacy premises in all States and Territories except for Queensland. These vaccinations must be conducted such that they meet all administration area requirements for the relevant State or Territory.

⁹ [Scope-of-Practice-of-Community-Pharmacists.pdf \(guild.org.au\)](https://www.guild.org.au/programs/vaccination-services/vaccination-service-requirements)

¹⁰ <https://www.ncirs.org.au/public/vaccines-community-pharmacy>

¹¹ <https://www.guild.org.au/programs/vaccination-services/vaccination-service-requirements>

Australian Immunisation Register

The Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)¹² is a national register that records vaccinations given to people of all ages in Australia. Previously known as the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR), in 2016 it changed to a whole of life register for children and adults.

As record numbers of Australians choose to receive their vaccinations from their pharmacies, pharmacies now must actively contribute to the AIR by uploading patient records. It is mandatory for all vaccination providers to report vaccinations to the AIR.

Guild Corporate Vaccinations

The community pharmacy network has been delivering annual influenza vaccines to Australian workers through employee wellness programs, thereby helping increase immunisation rates and minimise absenteeism from work and supporting the National Immunisation Strategy.

The Guild's corporate vaccination program partners with a range of government organisations and private employers to enable many workers to access the annual influenza vaccine from the Guild's network of pharmacies. The program offers employees services after hours and on the weekends. More information is available at www.guildcorporatehealth.com.au

Related Policies

Nil

Authority

Endorsed

National Council – September 2021

National Council – January 2018

Reviewed

Policy and Regulation Sub-Committee – July 2021

Policy and Regulation Sub-Committee – October 2017

Pharmacy Viability Committee – November 2017

¹² <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register/what-register>