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Vaccine reset under way as 20m additional Pfizer doses ordered

[Tom McIlroy](#) and [Tom Burton](#)

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The massive task of [resetting Australia's COVID-19 vaccine rollout is under way](#) after the federal government secured 20 million additional doses of the Pfizer drug, moves epidemiologists say could allow all adults to be vaccinated by Christmas.

Advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation suggesting the Oxford-University AstraZeneca drug was not preferred for people under 50 forced the reset, necessary due to the risk from [a rare but sometimes fatal blood-clotting issue](#).





Pfizer vaccine doses being prepared at the Western Health Sunshine Hospital COVID-19 vaccination hub in Melbourne. **Penny Stephens**

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the additional doses would be available by the final quarter of 2021, bringing total vaccine orders to about 171 million doses. Under the new agreement, delivery of Pfizer stocks would expand in April, and again in May and July.

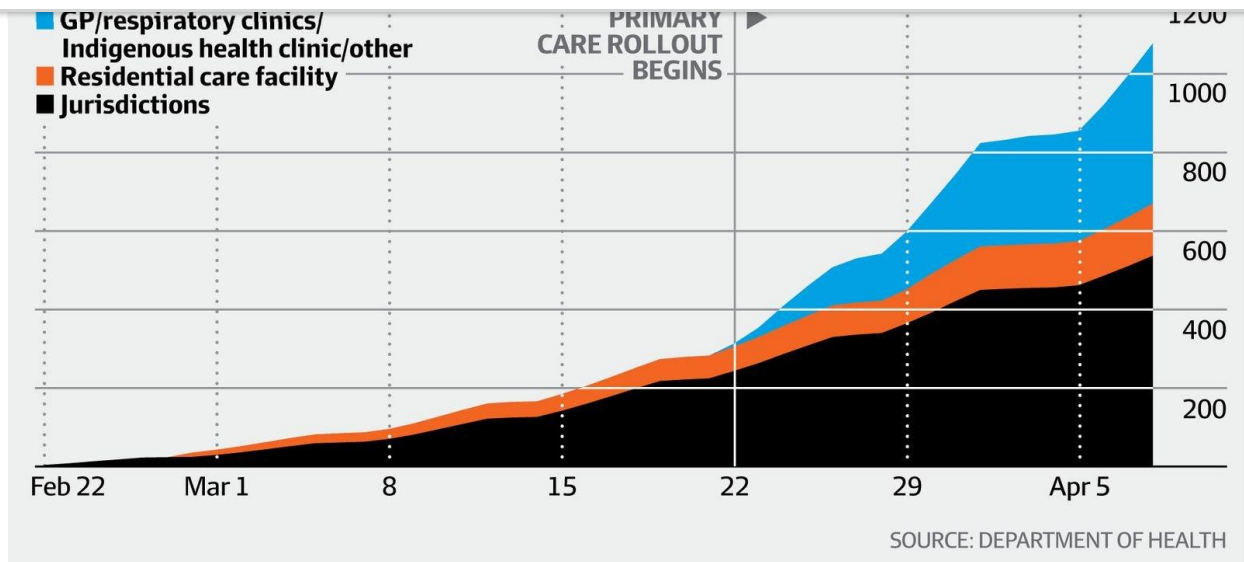
Mr Morrison said it was too early to say when all Australians would receive at least their first injection, coming as community confidence frays over targets set by the government.

“We’re not in a position at the moment to reconfirm a timetable. We’re not in that position and I’m not going to do that,” he said.

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The immediate focus of the rollout will stay on the elderly and vulnerable in phases 1A and 1B. The Prime Minister stressed the AstraZeneca drug remained safe and effective, noting his mother was due to receive an injection soon,

States including NSW will restart administering the AstraZeneca drug from Monday, with national cabinet agreeing on new informed consent rules.



[Premier Gladys Berejiklian is pressing ahead with a mass vaccination hub in Sydney's west](#), but supply remained a key restraint.

The Pfizer drug, developed with German drug company BioNTech, is being used in about 40 countries and the European Union. More than 1 million doses have been imported into Australia already, with most to go to frontline health workers and the elderly.

It is about 91 per cent effective at preventing COVID-19.

[UNSW Professor Mary-Louise McLaws](#) said the new vaccine arrangements would lead to a better health and economic outcomes.

Professor McLaws said because the Pfizer vaccine second dose is given 21 days after the first dose, as opposed to 12 weeks for the AstraZeneca vaccine, it would mean a faster roll out.

She calculated this would enable all adults to be vaccinated by the end of the year, as opposed to March next year primarily relying on the AstraZeneca vaccine.

“It’s also going to be more epidemiologically sound,” Professor McLaws said.

are greatest risk of dying by ensuring they won't catch the disease to die, because they'll be protected by having a very good vaccine in the young people's arms."

Professor McLaws said it would also enable mass hubs to be fully exploited because it will be problematic to deliver the Pfizer vaccine through GPs because of the special refrigeration requirements.

Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese slammed the government for bungling the vaccine strategy.

"The rollout of the vaccine is a debacle," he said. "This is critical for our health, but it's also critical for our national economy."



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CSIRO health and biosecurity director Rob Grenfell said the possibility of a blood clot from the AstraZeneca drug was five in every one million recipients.

"The risk of dying from a motor vehicle accident in Australia in 2018 was five in 100,000," Dr Grenfell said.

"The risk of death from COVID in people over 30 years old is one in 900, and for those over 50 it's one in 90. And 'long COVID', where debilitating symptoms last for months after initial infection, is a real concern."

“The main aim now will be to properly convey this information to the community so that public confidence in the vaccine rollout is maintained,” Dr Khorshid said.

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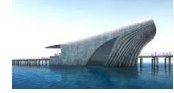
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