

Community Colleges Australia Statement of Support for National COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

The Board of Directors of Community Colleges Australia notes:

- All Australian governments – Commonwealth, state and territory – strongly support the national COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, with the advice of their respective Chief Medical Officers.
- Australian COVID-19 vaccination rates currently rank low on world-wide comparisons.
- Vaccination is one of Australia’s top national priorities, to ensure the health and future prosperity of the nation, although a national awareness campaign is still in early stages.
- The overwhelming majority of the Australian population remains highly vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Historically, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups – excepting Indigenous Australians, who are reached by Aboriginal Medical Services – are frequently among the least-vaccinated Australians, due to lack of access, information and opportunity.
- There have been continued COVID-19 “leaks” from quarantined travellers, which have caused widespread economic and social disruption – including to post-secondary education – such as occurred again in Melbourne and Sydney in June 2021.
- Online and distance learning from home, while embraced by many post-secondary institutions and learners, is not an alternative for most of the basic education, training and other community support services provided by Australian adult and community education (ACE) organisations.
- Many vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians do not have a regular relationship with a general practitioner (GP); they are therefore less likely to participate in a COVID-19 vaccination roll-out which is led by GPs.
- The Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector each year enrolls more than 4 million Australians between the ages of 15 to 64, triple the number of university students, making it the largest educational sector in Australia.
- The VET sector proportionately reaches more disadvantaged Australians than other education sectors.
- Within the Australian VET sector, ACE providers proportionately reach even more vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians than other types of providers, which includes people with a disability, from non-English speaking backgrounds, from lower socio-economic groups, who are Indigenous, who are older (and therefore more vulnerable to COVID-19), and who live in regional and rural areas – where ACE providers play a special role.
- ACE providers have strong local and regional bases and networks in their communities and regions, and they conduct continued outreach to disadvantaged groups as well as partner with other local service organisations.

Accordingly, the Board of Directors of Community Colleges Australia resolves to support the efforts of Chief Medical Officers of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and encourages its members assist with dissemination of government health messages on the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign, in order to ensure the health of their students, staff and communities.

Issued by Don Perlmut, PhD, CEO & Company Secretary
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