

CORONAVIRUS — VACCINATION — SECOND BOOSTER

210. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the recommendation of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation that select high-risk groups should receive a second COVID-19 booster vaccination.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how eligible Western Australians can receive their winter booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house why maintaining WA's world-leading vaccination rates is so important for our ongoing response to COVID-19?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for Geraldton for her question.

- (1)–(2) Yes, it is the case that the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recently recommended a winter booster COVID vaccination for vulnerable groups as we move towards the winter flu season, and also because the eastern states in particular are experiencing another surge of the Omicron variant BA.2, with all the cases pretty much being the BA.2 variant. Western Australia is currently in its first wave of COVID, having had outstanding management of COVID over the last two years. We are well prepared to deal with that. The vulnerable groups that are recommended to have the winter booster are essentially those who are over 65 years of age, residents of aged-care or disability care facilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years of age, and people over 16 years of age with severe immunosuppression who have already received a fourth dose, meaning that it will be their fifth booster to keep those people safe. We know that that booster dose is very important because it is keeping people out of hospitals and allowing them to manage COVID at home. Thirty per cent of people in hospital currently are unvaccinated, and, on top of that, another 30 per cent have had only two doses. Combined with that, that is stark evidence of the importance of the booster to keep people well and out of hospital and out of ICU. At this stage, ATAGI is not recommending a fourth dose for people who are not in a vulnerable group. Those people are eligible four months after their third booster. ATAGI also recently made an important recommendation that people can receive their flu vaccination at the same time as their COVID booster, which is really good news because people will not have to wait. In fact, they can get their flu dose at the same place that they get their COVID booster. People can access a COVID booster at state clinics, GPs and pharmacists—the same places at which they can access a flu vaccination—and it includes Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Novavax where appropriate. People are encouraged to book but they can walk into clinics for their winter booster. It is incredibly important that people who are eligible access this COVID booster and their flu vaccination as we come into the flu season. The booster is keeping people out of hospital and it is keeping people well and it will see us well through this winter.