



Covid vaccine injury payouts in Australia explode to \$77 million, budget reveals

Description

AUSTRALIA: Payouts for Covid vaccine injuries are set to explode by more than 80 times to nearly \$77 million, budget papers reveal.

Payouts for Covid-19 vaccine injuries are set to explode more than 80-fold to nearly \$77 million by July next year, Tuesday's budget papers reveal.

The figure was quietly buried in the Services Australia portfolio budget statement, in a table detailing third-party payments from the agency "on behalf of other entities".

Services Australia administers the scheme for the Health Department.

The table reveals that in 2021-22, the Covid vaccine claims scheme paid out just \$937,000 — which would work out to about 47 people if they each received the maximum \$20,000.

But in 2022-23, that amount is estimated to blow out to \$76.9 million, equating to 3845 claims at the maximum rate.

A spokesman for Services Australia was unable to provide any further detail on the payouts, such as the number or size of claims.

The compensation scheme, which is currently scheduled to end on April 17, 2024, allows Australians to claim up to \$20,000 for medical costs, lost wages or other expenses if they suffer an adverse reaction to a Covid vaccine.

Special appropriation – *Dental Benefits Act 2008*

Special appropriation – *National Health Act 1953 – Aids and App*

Special appropriation – *Medical Indemnity Agreement Act 2002*

Special account – Australian Immunisation Register

Special appropriation – *Midwife Professional Indemnity (Common
Contribution) Scheme Act 2010*

Special appropriation – *Aged Care Act 1997*

Special appropriation – *National Health Act 1953 – Continence A
Assistance Scheme*

Special appropriation – *Public Governance, Performance and
Accountability Act 2013 s77*

Annual appropriation

– Pharmaceutical Benefits

– Health Workforce

– Medical Benefits

– Primary Care Practice Incentives

– Primary Health Care Quality and Coordination

– Preventative Health and Chronic Disease

– Hearing Services

– COVID-19 Vaccine Claim Scheme

Total

Vaccine claims scheme payouts estimated to increase to \$76.9 million in 2022-23.

But potential applicants and legal experts have criticised it as overly complex and difficult to access, since a medical professional is required to sign off on documentation linking the reaction to the vaccine, and only a small number of officially recognised side effects such as myocarditis are covered.

Figures released earlier this month showed out of 2987 people to apply for compensation, only 59 were successful, with experts describing the rate of payouts as [“absolutely pitiful”](#).

“With all of the hoops you’ve got to jump through, and the paperwork you’ve got to do and the medical support you’ve got to find with evidence, you’d be thinking, ‘Is it even really worth it?’” said Shine Lawyers head of medical negligence [Clare Eves](#).

“It’s probably a lot more hassle and stress for somebody than the benefit of the other end.”

According to the Therapeutic Goods Administration, there have been 136,523 total [adverse event](#) reports out of more than 63.8 million Covid vaccine doses as of October 16, 2022, a rate of 0.2 per cent.

The TGA has identified 14 reports where the cause of death was linked to vaccination from 939 reports received and reviewed, including one related to myocarditis after Moderna.

“Vaccination against Covid-19 is the most effective way to reduce deaths and severe illness from infection,” the TGA says.

“The protective benefits of vaccination far outweigh the potential risks.”



A pharmacist administers Covid vaccine booster. Picture: Asanka Ratnayake/Getty

The October budget sets out \$2.6 billion to extend Australia's Covid response.

“Funding will ensure continued supplies of personal protective equipment from the National Medical Stockpile, access to vaccines and antiviral treatments for at-risk cohorts and new Medicare Benefits Schedule items to test for Covid-19 and other respiratory viruses,” budget papers state.

“National cabinet has also agreed to extend the National Partnership on Covid-19 Response to

December 31, 2022 to continue support for hospitals, testing and other health services delivered by the states and territories to manage the pandemic.”

The \$2.6 billion includes a \$355.8 million package “for the distribution and uptake of Covid-19 vaccines across Australia”.

Of that, \$314 million will go towards the “distribution of fourth vaccine doses in primary care settings, pharmacies, state-based clinical sites, aged and disability care facilities and First Nations communities”.

It also includes \$41.8 million for “communication activities to drive uptake with a specific focus on people at risk of severe disease and those with lower access to mainstream media”.

“The government has also provisioned \$500 million in 2022-23 for the procurement of additional vaccines and treatments on the National Medical Stockpile,” the budget says.

The Australian government has provided indemnities to the suppliers of Covid vaccines for which the Commonwealth entered into advance purchasing agreements, “covering certain liabilities that could result from the use of the vaccines”.

by Frank Chung

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