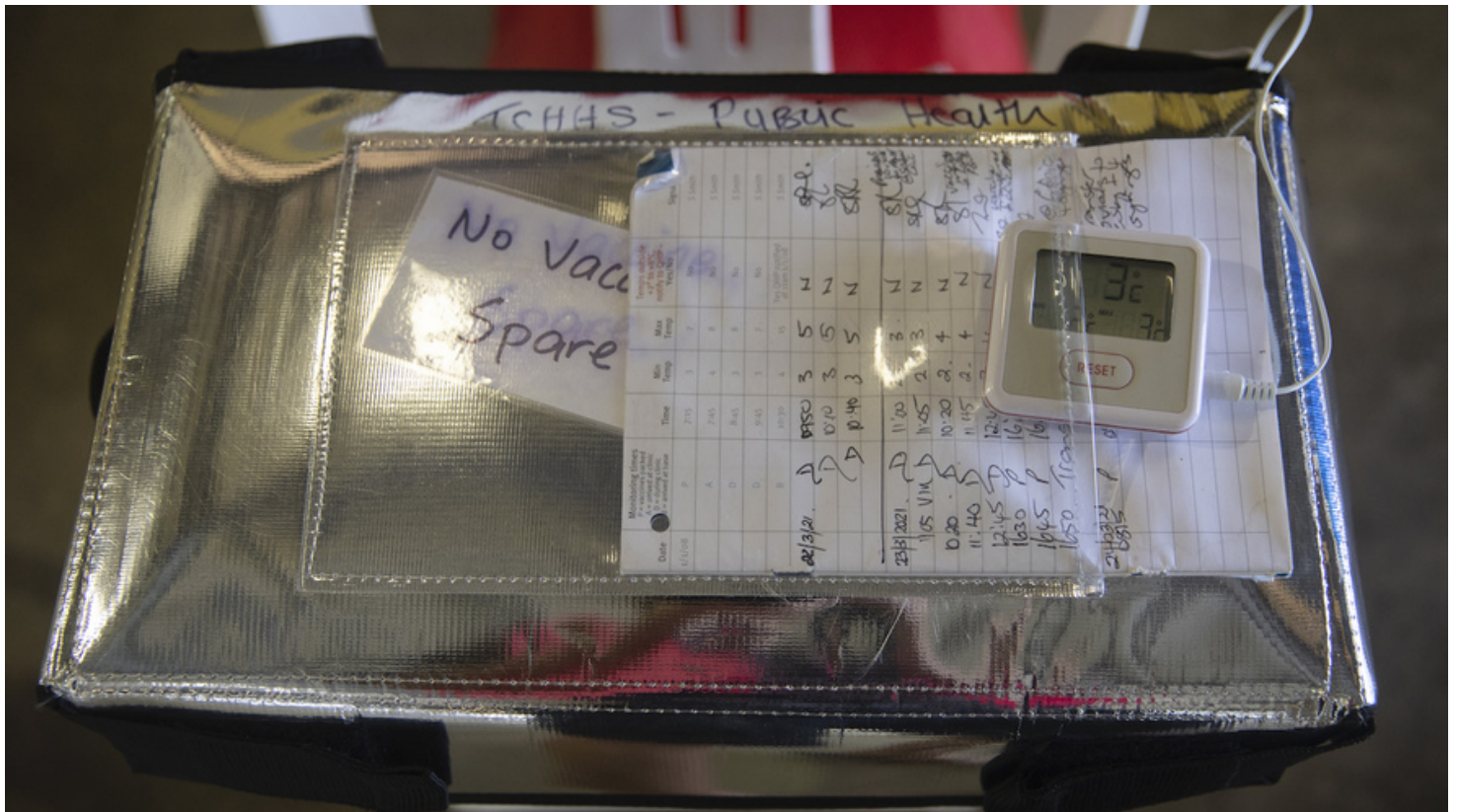


‘I love you and my people’: Vaccine rolls out among Aboriginal community

By The Age, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.04.21

Word Count 355

Level 570L



Refrigerated doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine are seen packed in cool box. Photo: Brook Mitchell/Getty Images

In early 2020, COVID-19 began to spread across Australia. COVID-19 is a flu-like illness. Indigenous Australian communities were closed to visitors. No one was allowed in, and no one could leave.

The lockdowns helped protect Indigenous communities. Today, no Indigenous Australians have died from COVID-19. Overall, only 149 cases were reported.

The first Australians were vaccinated against COVID-19 in February 2021. Round one included frontline health workers. It also included people who work in quarantine.

Older Adults, Many Aboriginal People Eligible

From March, Indigenous elders can get vaccinated. They must be over 55 years old. Those with an illness can get vaccinated, too. Non-Indigenous adults over 70 can also get the vaccine.

Uncle Ivan Wellington lives in Campbelltown. It is near Sydney, in New South Wales. Uncle Ivan is an Aboriginal elder. He was the first in his community to get vaccinated.

Uncle Ivan was vaccinated on March 22. He got his shot at an Indigenous medical service. It is run by Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation. Tharawal provides healthcare to about 5,000 people.

Uncle Ivan was thrilled to get his shot. He was the first of 80 people that day. Afterwards, he thanked his community. Then he thanked everyone who kept them safe during the COVID-19 outbreak. "I love the work you do, and the people you serve," Uncle Ivan said.

Dr. Heather McKenzie works at Tharawal. She helped organise the vaccine roll out. McKenzie was excited about getting her shot. She said being vaccinated would help protect the community she serves.

McKenzie ran an information event about the vaccine. It helped people understand what to expect. Still, some people were nervous. Uncle Ivan was worried about possible side effects. McKenzie said he didn't need to worry. Doctors can treat side effects better than they can treat COVID-19, she said.

Tharawal staff announced the first round of vaccinations by text message. Every shot was booked within 10 minutes.

Leonie Murdoch was also vaccinated that day. Murdoch is 62 years old. She has lung problems. Murdoch said it was important to vaccinate Aboriginal elders. "If we lose our elders, we lose our entire library [of knowledge]."

Quiz

- 1 Which question is answered in the introduction [paragraphs 1-3]?
- (A) How many Indigenous Australians in total got COVID-19?
 - (B) What number of Indigenous Australians have been vaccinated?
 - (C) Who is in charge of giving vaccines to Indigenous Australians at Tharawal?
 - (D) Why do some Indigenous Australians feel worried about the vaccine?
- 2 Read the section "Older Adults, Many Aboriginal People Eligible."
Select the sentence from the section that explains why McKenzie was happy after she got the shot.
- (A) She helped organise the vaccine roll out.
 - (B) She said being vaccinated would help protect the community she serves.
 - (C) McKenzie ran an information event about the vaccine.
 - (D) Doctors can treat side effects better than they can treat COVID-19, she said.
- 3 How did lockdowns affect the Indigenous communities?
- (A) The lockdowns helped to spread COVID-19 more easily there.
 - (B) The lockdowns helped to protect them from getting COVID-19.
 - (C) The lockdowns caused them to get vaccines later than other people.
 - (D) The lockdowns caused them to get fewer vaccines than other people.
- 4 Which event happened FIRST with COVID-19 vaccinations?
- (A) Indigenous elders over 55 could get vaccinated.
 - (B) Frontline health workers could get vaccinated.
 - (C) Non-Indigenous adults over 70 could get vaccinated.
 - (D) Anyone who was very young could get vaccinated.