



**Collaboration on Social  
Science and  
Immunisation (COSSI)  
annual report 2021**

## About COSSI

The Collaboration on Social Science and Immunisation (COSSI) is a collective of researchers, healthcare professionals, people working in immunisation policy and practice, and consumer representatives who work collaboratively to improve vaccine acceptance and uptake in Australia. COSSI was established by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) and the University of Sydney in 2016.

The Chair of COSSI is Associate Professor Margie Danchin (2018 – current), with Associate Professor Holly Seale as Deputy Chair (2018 – current).

## What does COSSI do?

The aim of COSSI is to better inform Australian immunisation policy and practice with high-quality evidence from the social sciences.

The objectives of the network are to:

- facilitate communication and collaboration between those working in the social science of immunisation
- share research and findings
- build capacity in research, evaluation and translation.

COSSI activities include bi-monthly knowledge exchange meetings, seminars/webinars and a biennial one-day meeting preceding the PHAA National Immunisation Conference. Members also communicate and share knowledge via the COSSI email list.

## COSSI 2021 highlights

In 2021, COSSI members played an integral role in supporting the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Members contributed by making recommendations via reports and publications, informing the public through media commentary, training vaccine advocates and being active on the World Health Organization (WHO), Commonwealth and jurisdictional committees, including the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) COVID-19 vaccine working group on vaccine safety, confidence and evaluation.

Some specific COSSI outputs include:

### Reports

#### **A COVID-19 vaccination strategy to support uptake amongst Australians: Working paper**

Achieving high uptake of a safe and effective vaccine to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) continues to be a public health priority. To support the COVID-19 vaccination goals and aims outlined by the Australian Government and ATAGI, COSSI developed a Six Point Strategy aiming to support the design and implementation of a COVID-19 vaccine program in Australia.

This report is available on the NCIRS website: [ncirs.org.au/cossi/cossi-reports-and-publications](https://ncirs.org.au/cossi/cossi-reports-and-publications)

## Publications

- Jessica Kaufman, Katie Attwell, on behalf of the Collaboration on Social Science and Immunisation (COSSI) Working Group. **Maintaining routine vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Medical Journal of Australia. 1 February 2021;214:93-93.e1.doi: [10.5694/mja2.50919](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50919)
- Julie Leask, Samantha J Carlson, Katie Attwell, Katrina K Clark, Jessica Kaufman, Catherine Hughes, Jane Frawley, Patrick Cashman, Holly Seale, Kerrie Wiley, Katarzyna Bolsewicz, Maryke Steffens and Margie H Danchin. **Communicating with patients and the public about COVID-19 vaccine safety: recommendations from the Collaboration on Social Science and Immunisation.** Medical Journal of Australia. 16 June 2021;215:9-12.e1. doi:[10.5694/mja2.51136](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51136)
- Julie Leask, Holly Seale, Jane H Williams, Jessica Kaufman, Kerrie Wiley, Abela Mahimbo, Katrina K Clark, Margie H Danchin and Katie Attwell. **Policy considerations for mandatory COVID-19 vaccination from the Collaboration on Social Science in Immunisation.** Medical Journal of Australia. 12 September 2021. doi: [10.5694/mja2.51269](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51269)

## Webinars

### Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination - 26 July 2021

This webinar considered the policy, behavioural, ethical and epidemiological aspects of mandating COVID-19 vaccination.

- 1,288 registrants
- 459 live attendees
- recording viewed 1,551 times

View the recording of this webinar [here](#).

## Training

### COSSI Vaccine Champions Training Program

At the start of the pandemic in Australia, COSSI developed a Vaccine Champions and Vaccine Communication program, led through the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) (<https://vha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Vaccine-Champions-Program-Factsheet-202107.pdf>)

The training program was developed to empower healthcare providers, community, faith and industry leaders to become vaccine advocates or “champions”, recognising that traditional information campaigns or vaccine promotion strategies were unlikely to be effective for many of these groups.

The program features 90- to 120-minute webinars about COVID-19 vaccine safety, effectiveness and risk communication and provides guidance on how to engage with people who are hesitant in person, in online forums, through social media and in healthcare environments. These champions provide training and advocacy in their own communities and workplaces to build vaccine confidence, guide individuals towards trustworthy sources of information and encourage vaccine uptake. The program will be expanded to countries in the Western Pacific region through the DFAT-funded ARIA-RISE program.

Associate Professor Margie Danchin and Dr Jessica Kaufman have delivered this program to over 70 different groups in Australia, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) communities, individuals working with those who are homeless or who have disabilities, Aboriginal health groups, settlement services, Department of Education, people working in the emergency management sector, transport industry, police and many others.

Associate Professor Holly Seale adapted the training program and delivered an additional 27 sessions in New South Wales with CALD community organisations/leaders/faith leaders, people working in the homeless sector, those working with people living with mental health issues, disability and HIV, including case workers, doctors and nurses.

Both Associate Professor Margie Danchin and Professor Julie Leask have also delivered additional webinars for Pacific Island country physicians, WHO (WHO Regional Vaccine Confidence training and for WHO Western Pacific Regional Office) and DFAT (the Centre for Health Security DFAT Partners forum and the EPI staff in the Philippines). Associate Professor Holly Seale has been working with WHO Europe to develop COVID-19 vaccine support resources for health workers and has delivered a series of lectures to health professionals located in Asia focused on vaccine acceptance and communication.

## **Knowledge Exchange Meetings**

In 2021 the following knowledge exchange meetings took place:

### **November**

- Dr Sami Carlson, Telethon Kids Institute. Coronavax: Preparing community and government
- Dr Jane Frawley, University of Technology Sydney. [COVID-19 decision aid](#): an online, interactive resource to help people make decisions about the COVID-19 vaccine

### **September**

- Professor Helen Bedford, University College London. The UK COVID-19 vaccine roll-out stories from the front line

### **May**

- Dr Katie Attwell, University of Western Australia. Expert bricolage and the production of ideas for global health crisis: a case study of vaccine hesitancy

Visit the [NCIRS website](#) for a list of previous KEMs)

## **Online engagement**

- [Twitter @COSSI Vaccine](#)
  - 714 followers
- [COSSI website](#)
  - 2,689 page views (January – October 2021)

## How to join COSSI

COSSI is open to researchers, healthcare providers, policymakers, consumer advocates and postgraduate students working or interested in social science and immunisation. COSSI also welcomes professionals in other countries who wish to learn more about social science and immunisation in Australia and to communicate their experience with us. Please join us if you are interested in networking, assistance in methodology, learning from others and accessing research-related information.

As a member, you will receive emails via the COSSI mailing list and invitations to participate in Knowledge Exchange Meetings and COSSI seminars/webinars. All messages to the mailing list are moderated.

Join COSSI here: [ncirs.org.au/cossi/join-cossi](https://ncirs.org.au/cossi/join-cossi)