

4 August 2021



**TRANSCRIPT**

**Dr Maria Boulton, Chair of AMA Queensland Council of General Practice**

**ABC Radio Brisbane – Breakfast with Craig Zonca and Loretta Ryan**

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 Vaccine rollout**

**CRAIG ZONCA:** You might have heard, the message from the Health Minister of the State has been ‘go to your GP for your first jab’ and then rely on a pharmacy, potentially, for your second jab, that pharmacies have a role to play as well. At GP clinics right now, what’s going on? Dr Maria Boulton owns a GP practice herself, she’s chair of the Australian Medical Association Queensland Council for GPs. Maria, hello to you.

**MARIA BOULTON:** Hi, good morning.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** Are the phones ringing off the hook at your practice?

**MARIA BOULTON:** Yes, yes, and we’re actually right in the middle of our COVID vaccine clinic, so it’s been a busy little morning for us.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** Okay, is that AstraZeneca or Pfizer that you’re delivering?

**MARIA BOULTON:** We deliver both. Today we’re doing Pfizer, and Sundays we do Pfizer and then Mondays we do AstraZeneca.

**LORETTA RYAN:** Maria, we’ve had an SMS from Jade at the Sunshine Coast who is a bit confused, and she says she’s keen to get vaccinated, confused about the process, she says she’s under 60 so eligible for Pfizer, do I just register with Queensland Health, do I ring my GP directly?

**MARIA BOULTON:** So, most GPs are taking online bookings. We just don’t want our phone lines fried. We need to keep them open for people ringing for medical conditions. But if you can just see if your GP is offering it – I’m sure most GPs have a website – and then you can just book online. You can also book online through [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au) and you’ll see all the clinics that are offering the vaccine.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** Okay, and that’s the Federal Government health website that you’re talking about there, [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au). Are you getting an increased supply at this stage, Maria?

**MARIA BOULTON:** No, we’re still at 300 a week or so of Pfizer and about the same of AstraZeneca. We keep asking for more and I know that I have a lot of GP colleagues who are still asking for more. We’re finding that the demand is still more than the supply that we’re getting.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** We heard from the Health Minister yesterday, talk about this idea to increase vaccination rates, to go to your GP for AstraZeneca in the first instance and then for the second jab potentially to your local pharmacist. What do you make of that approach?

**MARIA BOULTON:** For my clinic, that wouldn't be practical because when people come in for their first dose, we book their second dose. That way, it's easily done and we know who's coming. We also keep track of everything, and it's all in their charts. So, for us, we would prefer that people come and get the second dose here. That's what we would prefer.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** And what about the change the Chief Health Officer talked about, instead of waiting 12 weeks for your second dose, shortening that to eight weeks now?

**MARIA BOULTON:** If you look at the ATAGI website, they've got special provisions for hotspots, so when there's a large outbreak, they do recommend that people consider bringing the second dose of AstraZeneca sooner, and that is something that people have to see about, wherever they got their first one if they can bring that second one sooner in an area of an outbreak.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** And what are you saying to your patients who are under 60? Are you still saying "Pfizer for you" or are you talking them through potentially getting the AstraZeneca shot?

**MARIA BOULTON:** Yeah, it's a longer conversation and what we are saying is our wait list for Pfizer is six months, our wait list for AstraZeneca is much shorter. So, it's up to you what you want to do, and we go through the consent form and the consent process, and in the end it's up to them what they want to do. But certainly, if they want to have a vaccine, they can have one.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** Has the outbreak prompted more people under 60 to start asking about the AstraZeneca shot?

**MARIA BOULTON:** Yes, most definitely, and we're also seeing a lot of people over 60 who were perhaps a little bit reluctant or waiting to come forward and get their shot as well. And that's a really important group because they're very vulnerable and there are still too many who haven't been vaccinated, and they desperately need to come forward and get a vaccine.

**LORETTA RYAN:** Have you had many over-60s saying they want the Pfizer, but obviously they can't get it?

**MARIA BOULTON:** Yes, correct, and we have had a few, and as much as I would like to give it to them, we do have to follow the restrictions that are put on to us. Until there is more supply, our hands are tied.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** Maria Boulton, as a GP, as a practice owner, what's the common question that you're getting that we should be answering right now, in your mind?

**MARIA BOULTON:** I think the common question is – the biggest question we're getting is do you have a vaccine available and where can I book. And I think it's important that people book online if possible. On our online booking site, for example, we take a wait list so when more stock comes, those people will get an SMS. And what that does is it just frees up our reception for other phone calls. So yes, please, please, please book online if possible.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** And can you please clear something up for me? In terms of the vaccine supply that goes to GPs, who is managing that? Is that Federal Government or State Government?



**MARIA BOULTON:** That's Federal Government. It's done through the Vaccines Operation Centre and every week, we put in our request as to how many vaccines we would like. We don't receive that many, of course, but we're happy to receive whatever we get, and I can tell you that there's no spare vaccines in my fridge. We make sure that they all go into people's arms.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** That's probably replicated at every GP across the south-east right now.

**MARIA BOULTON:** Yes.

LORETTA RYAN: So, looking at this week, how many have you got there?

**MARIA BOULTON:** Looking at this week, we've got 300 AstraZeneca and 300 Pfizer. I've done about 10 hours of very early mornings, 5.30am starts, just to get these vaccines into people's arms and I know key staff and our reception staff are working double time to get it done.

**CRAIG ZONCA:** Well, we've taken you away from that job. We'd better let you get back to it. Thank you for your advice.

**ENDS**

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