

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Finance

Minister for the Public Service

Member for Kurrajong

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 7****16 May 2025****Question No. 448****MS CHIAKA BARRY MLA:** To ask the Minister for Health

1. Is the ACT policy in relation to eligibility for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab), which protects infants not protected by antenatal Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination, inconsistent with the policy of the Commonwealth; if so, why.
2. Why did the ACT decide to limit access to infants born after 17 March 2025.
3. Is it acceptable for infants under two years of age, born before 17 March 2025, not being able to access the protection from RSV that would be available to them if they lived in other States; if so, why.
4. Is this policy being reviewed; if so, when does the Minister expect this inconsistency will be removed.

MS RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. The ACT Government has implemented a Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) prevention program that includes the National Immunisation Program (NIP) funded RSV vaccine Abrysvo® in pregnancy, complemented by a Territory funded immunisation product Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) for eligible babies and high-risk infants and children. This is consistent with Commonwealth communications.

Abrysvo® vaccine has been funded under the NIP during pregnancy since 1 February 2025. Prior to this, Abrysvo® was available for private purchase since mid-2024.

Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) was made available in the ACT during 2024 as an ACT Government funded program and has been available in 2025 in the ACT to eligible babies since 17 March 2025.



Eligibility for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) is consistent with the program being conducted in New South Wales (NSW) to enable equitable access between jurisdictions. There is no Commonwealth Government funded program for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) in 2025.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation has made recommendations on the clinical indications for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) which has been published in the Australian Immunisation Handbook.

Each Australian jurisdiction has developed programs for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) based on factors including local epidemiology of the RSV disease, funding available and logistical considerations to operationalise the program. Internationally, there are RSV immunisation programs with different approaches reflecting the emergent nature of scientific evidence.

2. The program start date of 17 March 2025 for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) was determined by supply availability as established by the product sponsor, Sanofi. This date was also aligned with commencement of the NSW RSV prevention program to ensure cross-border consistency. Since the inclusion of Abrysvo® on the NIP in pregnancy, the ACT and NSW have experienced higher than expected vaccination uptake. This has made it possible to expand eligibility for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) to include babies born from 1 January 2025 who meet the newborn eligibility criteria. The expansion of eligibility means that babies under six months, meeting the eligibility criteria, will be protected through the peak of the RSV season.

A catch-up program for Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) for eligible babies born after 1 January 2025 and certain babies born before this date with risk conditions for severe RSV disease is available through Canberra Health Services (CHS) outpatient clinics and will remain available through general practitioners (GPs) on a case-by-case basis.

3. RSV is most likely to be severe in children in the first few months after they are born. Eligible infants born from 1 January 2025 can now access Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) through CHS catch-up clinics or through GPs on a case-by-case basis.

Children from six to 24 months of age with medically at-risk conditions for severe RSV can also access Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) in the ACT. This is also consistent with the recommendations from the Australian Immunisation Handbook and other states such as NSW.

Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) is not registered for children over 24 months.

4. The ACT RSV Prevention Program is being actively monitored, and this resulted in the expansion of eligibility. Evaluation of RSV programs is occurring both locally and nationally and will continue to inform and improve future RSV immunisation programs.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minster for Health

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This response required 2hrs 40mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$273.13.