

Australians trapped in vaccine 'Hunger Games' says top official

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Getting vaccinated in Australia is like "The Hunger Games" a top health official admitted Monday, as the country battles scarce supplies during a growing COVID-19 outbreak.

A [vaccine shortage](#) has led to panicked efforts by people looking to get jabbed, said Brad Hazzard, health minister for the country's most populous state New South Wales.

"It is almost a sense now of The Hunger Games of people chasing vaccine," he said of desperate residents turning up at mass vaccination centres or making regular calls to medical facilities in the hope of securing an appointment.

Set in a dystopian future, the wildly popular Hunger Games books and films saw a group of young people selected annually to participate in a televised battle to the death.

Just seven percent of Australia's roughly 25 million residents have been fully vaccinated, one of the lowest proportions for any developed nation.

The country's conservative government bet heavily on AstraZeneca, and developing a homegrown vaccine, which failed in trials.

Many Australians have shunned the available AstraZeneca offering—now only recommended for those aged over 60—and tried to secure appointments to get the Pfizer shot.

But the odds have not been in their favour as efforts to get more doses of Pfizer and other vaccines remain hampered by late decisions on ordering and limited global supply.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison is under growing pressure to increase the vaccination rate, as an outbreak in locked-down Sydney grew to more than 300.

Australia has seen 30,000 virus cases since the pandemic began, but several major cities imposed snap lockdowns to limit small outbreaks in recent weeks.

Hazzard said it was "easy to be critical" of the federal government's efforts in hindsight, "but I think they did their best."

But he warned "until we get enough vaccine—and enough GPs actually at the front-line able to provide that [vaccine](#) into arms—we will continue to have effectively The Hunger Games going on here," he said.

Last week Morrison revealed a four-stage plan to reopen Australia's borders and end the cycle of snap lockdowns, a plan which depends on a large portion of the population being vaccinated.

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