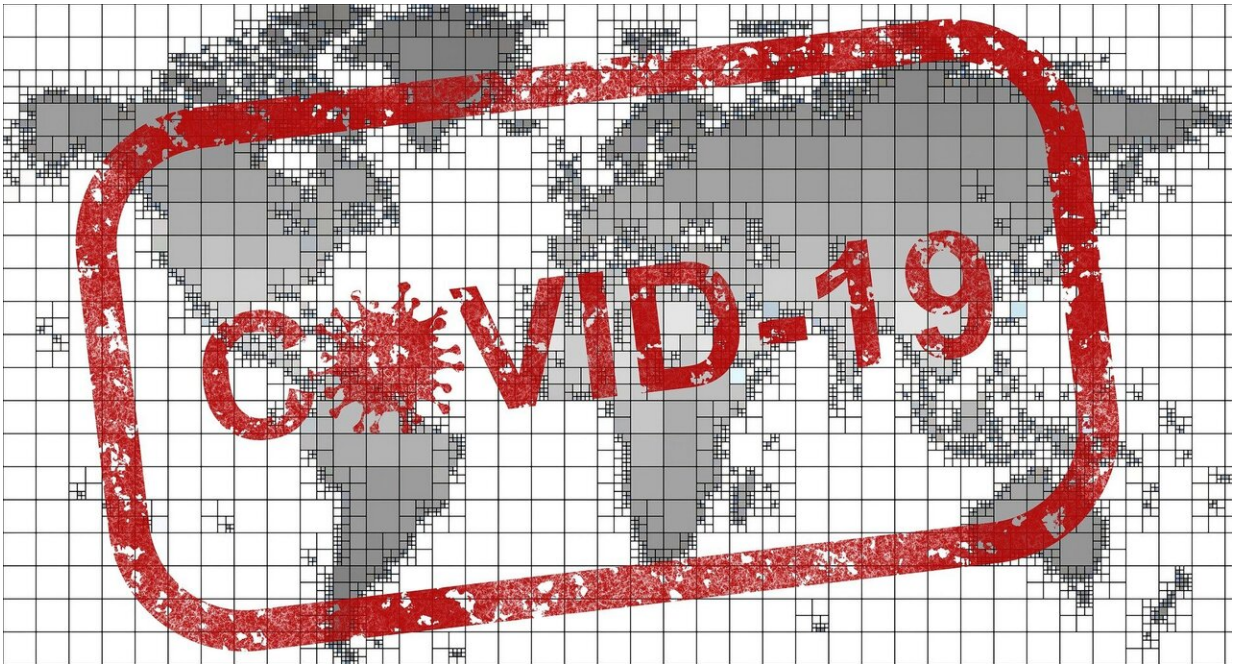


# Australia offers fourth COVID shot to over-30s

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Australia will offer a fourth COVID-19 vaccine to everyone over 30, health authorities said Thursday, as hospitals bulge with patients in a winter wave of infections.

The government said it is recommending a fourth jab for over 50s—but also offering it to everyone over 30 despite benefits to the younger age

group being unclear.

It followed a recommendation by the top immunization advisory body, which said it recognized [younger people](#) might want a winter booster dose, even though its impact for them "is uncertain but likely to be limited".

Australia had previously recommended a fourth COVID shot only to people over 65 as well as to [vulnerable groups](#), including those with weakened immune systems.

As new, more infectious Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5 race through the population, the number of Australian [hospital](#) patients with COVID has jumped by more than 1,000 in a month to about 3,900, with 140 people now in [intensive care](#).

"This is placing real pressure on our health and hospital systems," Health Minister Mark Butler told a news conference as he announced the decision.

More than 95 percent of people over the age of 16 are fully vaccinated in Australia, where few people now wear a mask or take measures to socially distance.

As restrictions are gradually dismantled in a country that previously shut its international borders for nearly 20 months to exclude the virus, Australia this week dropped all vaccine certificate requirements for foreign visitors.

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