



Media Release: Addressing childhood immunisation in western Sydney

18th February 2016

Following the release of the National Health Performance Authority's (NHPA) *Healthy Communities: Immunisation rates for children in 2014-15* Report, childhood immunisation continues to be an area of focus and improvement for western Sydney.

In its role as the Western Sydney Primary Health Network (WSPHN), WentWest has implemented a number of measures to work with local communities, health professionals and its health system partners to increase childhood immunisation rates in the local government areas of Auburn, Blacktown, the Hills, Holroyd and Parramatta. WentWest welcomes the NHPA Report as it highlights particular areas of need and supports much of the strategies currently employed through its established Western Sydney Immunisation Committee.

Among the measures undertaken by WentWest, has been a partnership with Western Sydney Public Health Unit (PHU) in a project focused on improving childhood immunisation rates for children with overdue immunisation, including children born overseas. The project will also seek to identify children under 5 who are overdue for vaccinations; follow up through immunisation providers and contact parents with the aim of children being up to date with immunisations; whilst also supporting local practices to improve systems for planning and reporting of immunisations.

As part of the project, WentWest's General Practice Support Team will work with practices and specific GPs identified by the PHU, with a particular focus on the Auburn and Parramatta LGAs where immunisation rates currently stand at 86.9% and 84.9% respectively, and data indicating higher rates of overdue immunisations.

WentWest CEO, Walter Kmet comments "The NHPA Report is an opportunity to highlight the many underlying challenges to improving childhood immunisation rates in western Sydney. Community awareness and education, cultural and linguistic challenges all present barriers to improving immunisation rates in our region. We are aware and responsive to these challenges as an organisation committed to better health outcomes for our community and will continue to work through the Western Sydney Immunisation Committee, local community, health professionals and our health system partners to address the barriers."



“While the NHPA Report highlights a regional challenge in 1 and 2 year old immunisations, it also reports a steady increase in 5 year old immunisation to 92.4% and even more for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in this age group at 95.2%. These results are reflective of a sustained effort in this age group over the past five years through a region-wide Immunisation Bike Competition encouraging the completion of the childhood immunisation schedule ahead of the schooling years. In the 2015-16 competition alone, we saw an increase of more than 700 entries to 1200 and over 144 practices participating.”

The Western Sydney Immunisation Committee meets on a quarterly basis and is made up of representatives from the local community, general practice and health system. The Committee is tasked with reviewing data such as that provided through the NHPA and developing localised strategies on how to address areas of need.

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About WentWest

WentWest’s focus on providing better health care in the community was strengthened with its appointment as a Tranche 1 Medicare Local in July 2011 to now operating as the Western Sydney Primary Health Network. WentWest has built on its experience as a Division of General Practice in supporting GPs and their practices, connecting health services to meet local needs, and striving for better health outcomes for western Sydney.

The population living in western Sydney is culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse, and we also have the largest urban Aboriginal community in Australia. WentWest works closely with doctors, allied health professionals, the Local Health District and many others to improve the coordination of local health and human services for these patients and their families.