

MEDIA RELEASE

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Immunisation Week, a timely reminder to protect the community

With World Immunisation Week 2016 fast approaching on the 27th-30th April, close attention is drawn to the critical importance of protecting community members against preventable diseases. Widely recognised as one of the world's most successful health interventions, this year's theme focuses on the *Closing the Immunisation Gap*.

As the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, WentWest continues to support an ongoing annual childhood immunisation campaign aimed at encouraging parents to immunise their children at four years old. With the purpose of reducing avoidable diseases amongst children, a *Bike Immunisation Competition* is run each year in time for the commencement of school.

Through the 2015-16 competition, WentWest in collaboration with general practices across western Sydney, gave families the opportunity to be rewarded for immunising their child. Those that were immunised within a four month period were entered into the draw to win one of 12 TREK bikes and a helmet. Following the initiative, almost 1,000 children across the region were immunised.

Last month, WentWest held the prize giving ceremony and Mr Salil Mahjan, local resident and father of winning child, who was immunised at MyHealth Medical Centre Parramatta, believes "Keeping up-to-date with immunisation is extremely important in maintaining the health of not only your child, but children within the community".

"Growing up in India, I was witness to a lack of immunisation with the spread of poliomyelitis amongst my class mates. Seeing the effect this had on those around me, made immunisation something that was always a priority when starting my own family".

Mr Mahjan says, "We are exceptionally lucky to have advanced medicines, technology and health services available. It's not worth taking a risk and leaving your family and community vulnerable", explains Mr Mahjan.

Blacktown general practitioner, Dr Michael Fasher states, "WentWest's immunisation campaign is a wonderful example of families and GPs working together to make western Sydney a healthy place".

"Immunisation is by far the safest and most effective way of safeguarding health in the community and protecting against outbreaks. A big thanks to WentWest for this great initiative".

To continue supporting the reduction of preventable diseases amongst the community, WentWest will be looking to implement initiatives aimed at encouraging immunisation amongst younger children within the 12 month old age bracket.

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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 Western Sydney Local Health District and many others to improve the coordination of local health services for patients and their families