



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP
Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kids' Immunisation Rates Topping the Nation

The Australian Immunisation Register quarterly data today shows childhood immunisation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has gone up across the board, and five-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have higher immunisation coverage in the country than non-Indigenous five-year-olds.

Coverage for these five-year-olds is on track to meet the 96 per cent immunisation goal set in the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023, and one-year-old children have coverage rates also exceeding the 88 per cent goal in the plan.

“These results are impressive and show important progress both for the National Immunisation Program, and the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023,” said Assistant Minister for Health and Ageing, Ken Wyatt AM MP.

“Immunisation is one of the most important public health interventions in the last 200 years. It protects the lives of the vulnerable in our community – in particular, our precious children. By working closely with our communities, we are finding innovative ways to reach out and increase awareness about the importance of immunisation, improve access to immunisation services and increase coverage. These new results show our approach is working.”

The Implementation Plan for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023 is the key to Closing the Gap in health. Developed in partnership with the Indigenous health sector, the plan identifies five key areas for significant action. Immunisation forms an important part of this, as does childhood health and development.

“Supporting our mums and bubs, to have a healthy pregnancy and to recognise the importance of immunisation for kids from the time they are born are key building blocks to a healthy life,” said Assistant Minister Wyatt.

“The Government has a number of important initiatives under the Implementation Plan that support communities in culturally appropriate ways to meet their health needs.

“The Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program is a specialised nurse-led home visiting program that supports women from early pregnancy through to the child’s second birthday with an intensive level of support.

“The New Directions: Mothers and Babies Services Program gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their mothers support with antenatal care, baby care, breast-feeding, nutrition, parenting, monitoring of developmental milestones, immunisation status and infections, and health checks before starting school.

“It is pleasing to see these programs driving even higher rates of immunisation.

“These programs are all part of the commitment to Closing the Gap - community-driven, tailored, innovative, and sensitive to individual and community needs. We want to see parents empowered by information, supported by appropriate services, and accessing care in ways that suit them.

“Increasing immunisation coverage is the result of community action and I want to see that continue.”

Through the National Immunisation Program, the Government provides free vaccines for eligible people against 17 infectious diseases – and covers Australians from birth to old age.

For more information, contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 4707