

Urgent action needed to tackle declining vaccination rates

The AMA is calling for immediate action to combat vaccine hesitancy and reverse declining immunisation rates across the country.

The AMA's new report, *From coverage to concern: a policy analysis of Australia's immunisation decline*, highlights a worrying drop in vaccination rates across child, adolescent and adult programs, as well as seasonal flu vaccination.

The AMA says the decline has far-reaching consequences, with preventable diseases re-emerging, driving up hospital admissions and stretching emergency departments.

AMA (WA) General Practice Group Chair Dr Mary Wyatt said urgent action was needed to invest in vaccination programs – one of the most effective preventative health measures that governments can support.

"The recent decline in vaccination rates is deeply concerning and has already led to outbreaks of diseases once thought nearly eradicated," Dr Wyatt said.

The AMA is urging government to rebuild trust in vaccines through GPs. To support this, the report highlights the need for greater investment in general practice, including

increased funding for the Workforce Incentive Program, to expand access to immunisation services through GPs and practice nurses.

"General practice remains the trusted healthcare home for many patients and has a proven track record of increasing vaccination uptake through strong community engagement," Dr Wyatt said. "Governments must reinvest in general practice to rebuild confidence, reduce vaccine hesitancy, and protect public health."

Launching the national report, AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen warned misinformation and anti-science sentiment were eroding public trust.

"Immunisation is the most successful and cost-effective health intervention globally, preventing between two and three million deaths a year," Dr McMullen said.

"We are seeing increasing global conversations about vaccine hesitancy, and it is putting lives at risk. Unfortunately, Australia is not immune, and it is deeply concerning to see declining rates here, especially among children." ■



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