

# Media Release

3 May 2019

## **South Eastern Sydney residents reminded to get their flu shot**

The South Eastern Sydney community is being reminded to get their flu vaccine with the launch of the 2019 flu campaign this week.

Professor Mark Ferson, Director, Public Health Unit, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) said with more than 9,600 confirmed influenza cases in NSW already this year, people should call ahead to their GP or pharmacist to get their flu jabs.

“Among SESLHD residents, in the first four months of 2019 there have been more than 1,660 influenza cases. This compares to 692 cases for the same period last year, and 535 for the same period in 2017 – which was one of the worst flu seasons on record,” Professor Ferson said.

“Vaccination is the best way to be protected against the flu. One million flu vaccines have now been delivered across the State.”

Pregnant women, young children and the elderly will be a major focus of this year’s flu campaign.

Free flu vaccines are available for pregnant women, Aboriginal people, those aged over 65, and anyone with medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

Hospitalisation rates for influenza are highest in young children with recent national figures showing about 100 per 100,000 in those aged six to 23 months.

Professor Ferson outlined the importance of the vaccine to the community.

“While we might all take flu for granted as a common winter disease, it can be deadly,” Professor Ferson said.

“In 2017, we had a significant flu season where more than 650 people died across the state.

“We cannot afford to be complacent.”

The NSW Government has invested about \$130 million in the 2018-19 Immunisation Program budget, including Commonwealth and state vaccines.

Free flu vaccines for children aged from six months to under five years of age are being provided under the NSW Government’s \$2.6 million program.

In addition to booking a flu shot, people are reminded that to help reduce the spread of flu, sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands regularly and stay home if sick.

For more information, please visit: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Influenza](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Influenza)