

Measles Control Campaign update

The Commonwealth of Australia, in conjunction with all State and Territory governments, conducted the Measles Control Campaign (MCC) between August and November 1998. The Campaign aimed to increase measles vaccination coverage and was the first stage of a longer term strategy to eliminate measles from Australia. It consisted of national media, education and vaccination programs and included the following four components:

- moving the second dose of measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) from 10-16 years of age to 4-5 years of age;
- school based delivery of a catch-up dose of MMR for primary school aged children;
- reminder letters to parents of pre-school aged children due or overdue for the first dose of MMR; and

- a letter to all parents of high school children advising them of the change to the routine MMR schedule, the importance of the second dose and asking them to ensure that their child had received two doses of the MMR vaccine.

The Campaign was very successful, with around 1.7 million, or 96%, of primary school aged children being vaccinated during the Campaign. More than 1.3 million of these children were vaccinated in the school program in almost 8,800 schools in all States and Territories. A serosurvey conducted after the Campaign showed that 94% of children aged 6-12 years were immune to measles, an increase from 84% before the Campaign. The *Australian Measles Control Campaign 1998 Evaluation Report* can be obtained from the Immunise Australia Internet website at <http://immunise.health.gov.au>.

Yellow fever vaccination for the Hajj

The Pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj) in Saudi Arabia is held each year in March and April. Pilgrims may arrive in Saudi Arabia between late January and early March and then commence leaving the country in early April. Up to 1,500 Australian residents travel to Mecca each year during the Hajj season.

Yellow fever has not been reported in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Health Ministry has advised WHO that only those travellers arriving from declared yellow fever infected countries will be required to have valid yellow fever vaccination certificates. Vaccination requirements for the

Hajj are published in the *Weekly Epidemiological Record* in early January each year.

However, for the past two years, the Saudi Embassy in Australia has adopted the policy of requiring all Australian travellers to the Hajj to be vaccinated against yellow fever as a condition of the issuing of the special Hajj visas. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care has asked the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to seek a clarification of the yellow fever vaccination policy from the Saudi Ministry of Health. When this issue is clarified, an update will be provided to State and Territory health authorities and will be published in *CDI*.

Yellow fever in Brazil

Brazil is a declared yellow fever infected country. In January and February this year a number of confirmed cases of yellow fever were reported by the National Health Foundation, which estimates that there may be up to 120 cases per year. The confirmed cases have all been

acquired in jungle areas, with some cases reported to have been acquired in national parks that are popular tourist destinations.

The WHO recommends that all travellers to Brazil should be vaccinated against yellow fever.