

## EMBARGOED TO 1AM, THURSDAY 11 APRIL

### More than 70,000 Australian children are not fully immunised

#### Background Information

*Healthy Communities: Immunisation rates for children in 2011–12* shows the percentages of children who are fully immunised at age 1 year, 2 years and 5 years. The numbers of children who are **not** fully immunised are also provided.

The results are reported for all children and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by Medicare Local catchment. Some results are broken down into more than 300 smaller geographic areas (called “statistical areas”), which are used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Results are also available for more than 1500 postcodes at [www.nhpa.gov.au](http://www.nhpa.gov.au)

#### What is a Medicare Local?

There are 61 Medicare Locals across Australia, covering defined geographic catchments, which have been established to improve the responsiveness, coordination and integration of primary health services within their areas. The data in this report were collected during the period that Medicare Locals were being set up. The findings serve as a starting point for understanding immunisation rates in Australia at a lower level of geography than state or territory level.

#### What is a “statistical area”?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports data broken down to varying levels of geography. As well as national and state figures, the ABS reports some information for geographic units called Statistical Areas Level 1, 2, 3 or 4. As well as giving immunisation rates for each of the 61 Medicare Local catchments across Australia, this report also provides this information for Statistical Areas Level 3 (also referred to in the report as “statistical areas” or “SA3s”). There are 333 Statistical Areas Level 3 across Australia, with populations between 30,000 and 130,000. This report gives information on the percentages of children fully immunised for 325 of these statistical areas, as the data for the remaining eight are not reported due to the small populations of children in these areas.

#### How to use this report

##### 1. Medicare Local catchments

Figure 3 and 5 (attached, and on pages 10 and 12 in the report) allow the reader to compare the percentages for children who are fully immunised at age of 1 year, 2 years and 5 years in each Medicare Local catchment. Figure 3 relates to all children, while Figure 5 provides the percentages specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are fully immunised at the same ages in each Medicare Local catchment.

In both figures, the highest percentages of children fully immunised are recorded for 2 year olds. However, among all children, the lowest percentages of children fully immunised are recorded for 5 year olds, while among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the lowest percentages are recorded at 1 year of age.



## 2. Statistical Areas

Pages 29-40 of the report show the findings for the 325 statistical areas. These pages, and the Key Findings on page 6, show that for all children (including Indigenous children) aged 5 years, there were 30 statistical areas where the percentages of fully immunised children were 85% or lower (compared to four statistical areas for children aged 2, and four statistical areas for children aged 1 year). Some statistical areas had 85% or less of children fully immunised in more than one age group, meaning there were 32 statistical areas where rates were this low for at least one age group.

At the upper end of the scale, for all children aged 5 years, there were three of the 325 statistical areas where the percentages of children fully immunised were 95% or higher (compared to 72 statistical areas for children aged 2, and 23 statistical areas for children aged 1 year). Some statistical areas had 95% or more of children fully immunised in more than one age group, meaning there were 77 statistical areas where rates were this high for at least one age group.

Results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not stated for any of the 325 statistical areas because the populations are too small to permit reliable reporting.

On pages 29, 33 and 37 (and attached), there are three graphs that show the distribution of immunisation rates for each statistical area, for each of the three age groups.

In these graphs, each dot represents one statistical area. The dots line up with the percentage of children fully immunised that was recorded for that area, and the colour of the dots reflects the range identified in the key.

The statistical areas with the highest and lowest percentages (two or more areas where results are tied) are named in the graphs.

The size of the dots is also proportional to the number of children in each statistical area who were not fully immunised. Larger dots therefore indicate statistical areas where there are more children who have not received all the relevant immunisations (see Figure 1, page 2).

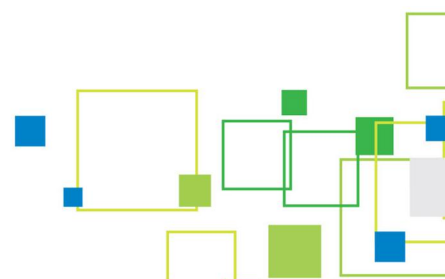
### Children not fully immunised

The National Immunisation Program Schedule lists the vaccinations that are recommended for all Australian children and offered to them by approved immunisation providers at no cost.

Fully immunised means that a child has received a specific set of vaccinations listed in the National Immunisation Program Schedule for their age. Four vaccinations on that Schedule are excluded for the purposes of measuring fully immunised status. Fully immunised for age means a child received the most recent vaccination for each disease, and assumes all previous vaccinations were received (see Figure 1, on page 2 of the report).

There were nearly 900,000 children aged 1, 2 or 5 years registered with the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register in 2011-12. The report suggests that of these, 76,769 were not fully immunised.

The following pages give details of how these nearly 77,000 children are dispersed geographically. On pages 16, 20 and 24, the table on the right-hand edge states the number of children not fully immunised in each Medicare Local catchment. On pages 18, 22 and 26 the same information is provided with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



On **pages 30, 34 and 38**, maps and tables show the dispersion of children who are not fully immunised within statistical areas. On the maps, the name of the statistical area with the highest percentage of children fully immunised, and the lowest percentage, are highlighted (more than one area is named in the case of tied results). Results are not reported at SA3 level for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Some diseases are so contagious that high immunisation rates are required to ensure effective protection. For example, studies suggest that more than 95% of a population needs to be immunised to prevent the spread of measles.

### **About the data**

The data in this report have been sourced from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) which is administered by the Australian Government Department of Human Services (Medicare). It has been estimated that the ACIR includes close to 99% of Australian children.

All of the results are mapped to the Medicare Local catchments in which children live (i.e. by the postcode for their address) rather than the location where the vaccinations were provided. This approach provides insight into the health of local populations.

The data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are based on Medicare enrolments records and levels of identification between Medicare Local catchments are subject to variation.

From 1 July 2012, Medicare Locals are responsible for ensuring high immunisation rates are maintained across their catchments. This report provides health care decision-makers with locally relevant information which, internationally, has been proven to help drive improvements in health care.

### **Why are we doing this report?**

The Authority bases its activities on 48 performance indicators agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Childhood immunisation is one of the 31 indicators for primary health care.

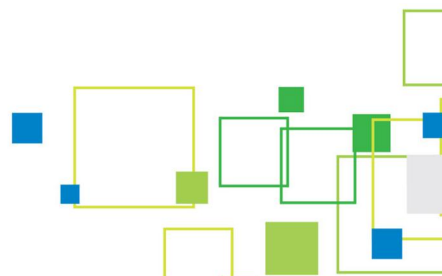
### **The role of the National Health Performance Authority**

The Authority was set up as an independent agency under the *National Health Reform Act 2011*. It began full operations in 2012. Under the terms of the Act, the Authority monitors and reports on the performance of Local Hospital Networks, public and private hospitals, primary health care organisations and other bodies that provide health care services.

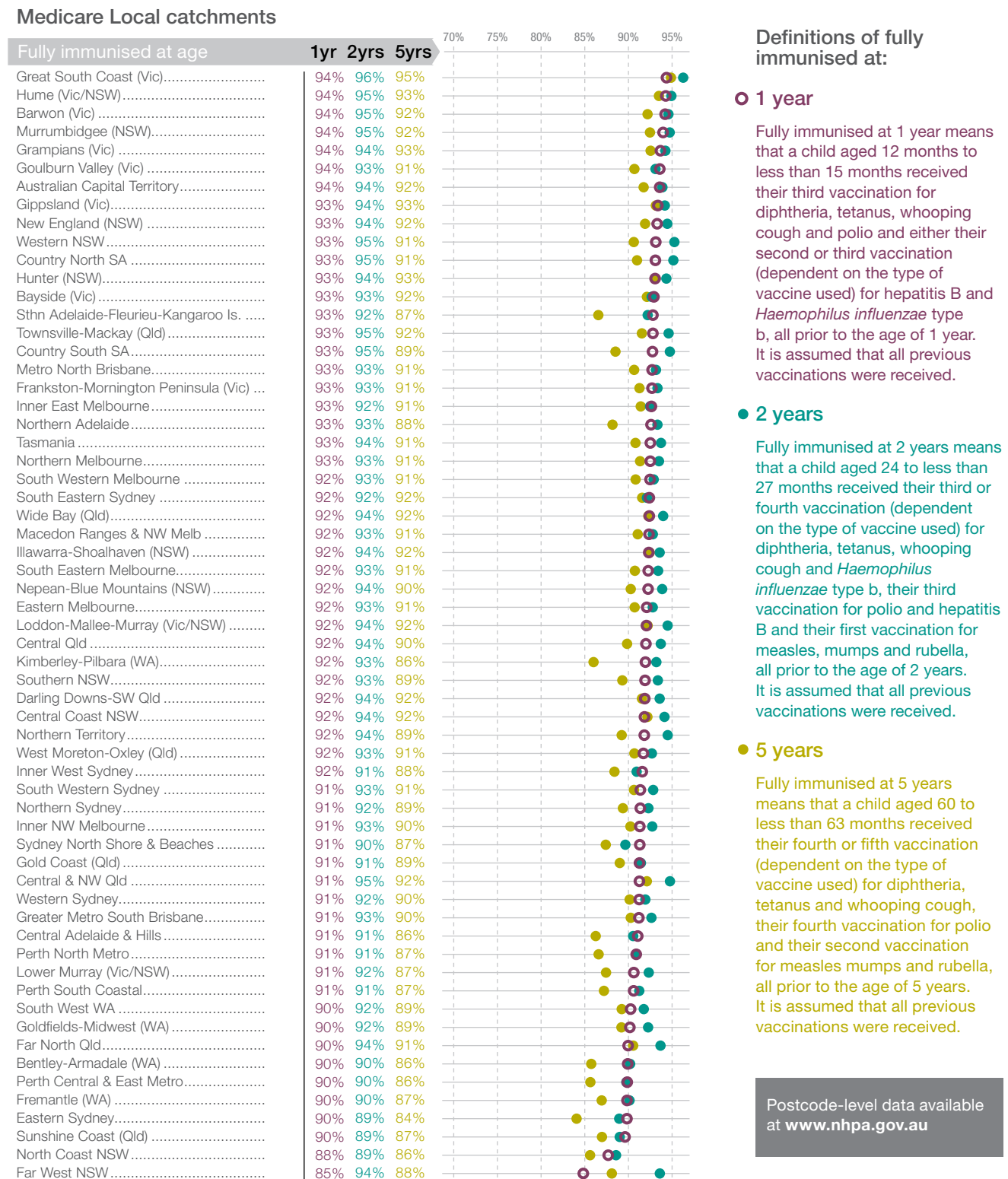
Ends

Media enquiries: 02 9186 9220  
Adam Cresswell 02 9186 9218 or 0481 037 626  
Sharon Hogan 02 8215 1169 or 0421 619 097

Follow NHPA on Twitter: @NHPAreporting



**Figure 3: Percentages of all children in each of 61 Medicare Local catchments that are fully immunised by age, 2011–12**



**Definitions of fully immunised at:**

**○ 1 year**

Fully immunised at 1 year means that a child aged 12 months to less than 15 months received their third vaccination for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio and either their second or third vaccination (dependent on the type of vaccine used) for hepatitis B and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, all prior to the age of 1 year. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received.

**● 2 years**

Fully immunised at 2 years means that a child aged 24 to less than 27 months received their third or fourth vaccination (dependent on the type of vaccine used) for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, their third vaccination for polio and hepatitis B and their first vaccination for measles, mumps and rubella, all prior to the age of 2 years. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received.

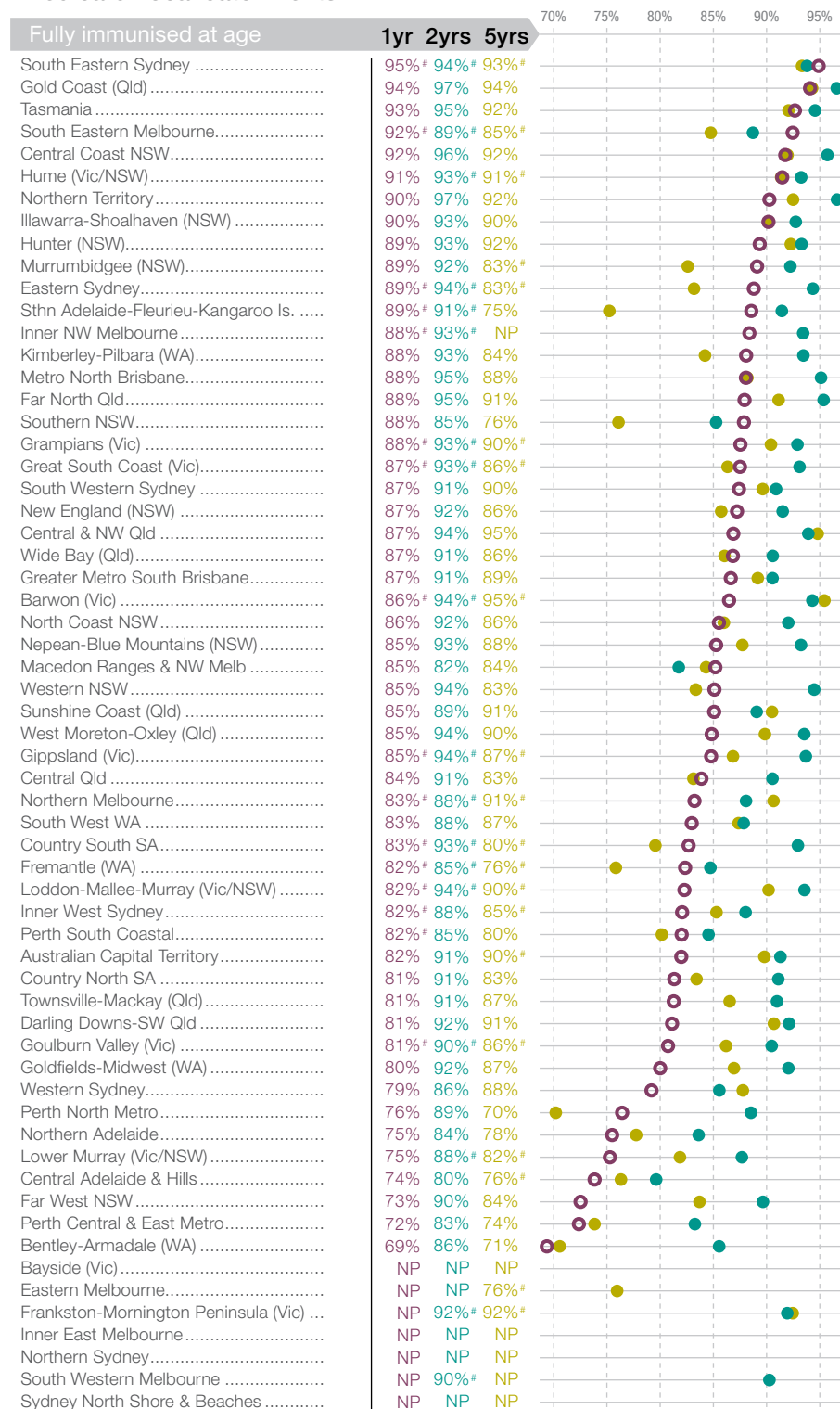
**● 5 years**

Fully immunised at 5 years means that a child aged 60 to less than 63 months received their fourth or fifth vaccination (dependent on the type of vaccine used) for diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, their fourth vaccination for polio and their second vaccination for measles mumps and rubella, all prior to the age of 5 years. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received.

Postcode-level data available at [www.nhpa.gov.au](http://www.nhpa.gov.au)

**Figure 5: Percentages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in each of 61 Medicare Local catchments that are fully immunised by age, 2011–12**

**Medicare Local catchments**



**Definitions of fully immunised at:**

**○ 1 year**

Fully immunised at 1 year means that a child aged 12 months to less than 15 months received their third vaccination for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio and either their second or third vaccination (dependent on the type of vaccine used) for hepatitis B and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, all prior to the age of 1 year. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received.

**● 2 years**

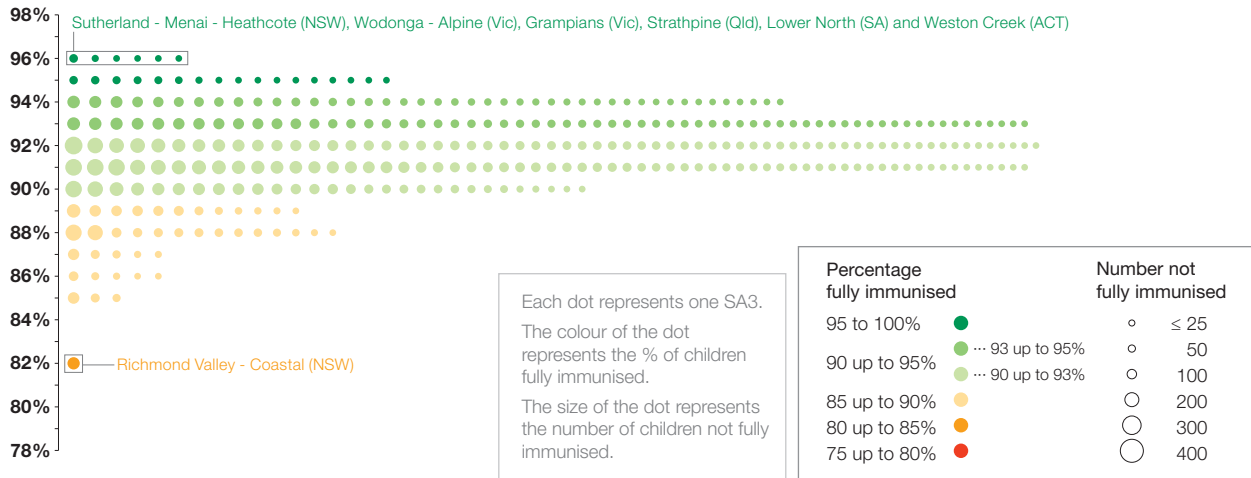
Fully immunised at 2 years means that a child aged 24 to less than 27 months received their third or fourth vaccination (dependent on the type of vaccine used) for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, their third vaccination for polio and hepatitis B and their first vaccination for measles, mumps and rubella, all prior to the age of 2 years. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received.

**● 5 years**

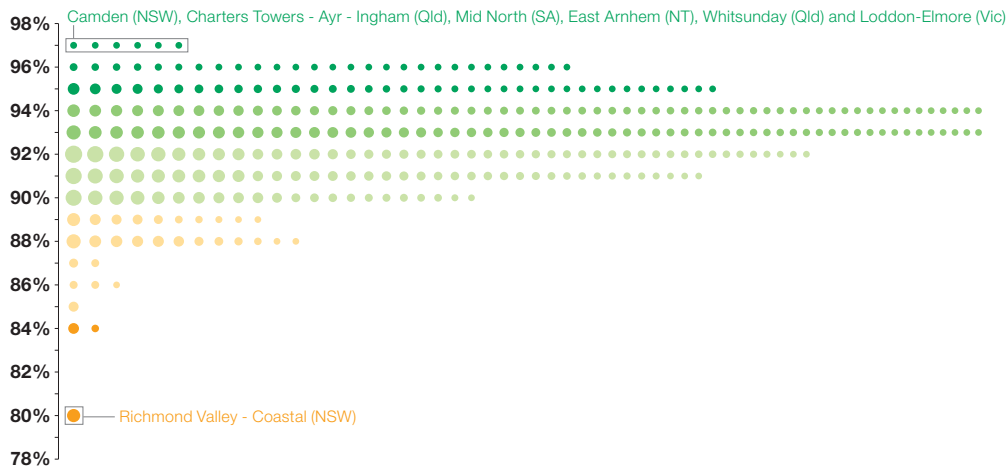
Fully immunised at 5 years means that a child aged 60 to less than 63 months received their fourth or fifth vaccination (dependent on the type of vaccine used) for diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, their fourth vaccination for polio and their second vaccination for measles mumps and rubella, all prior to the age of 5 years. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received.

# Interpret with caution: the eligible population is between 26 and 100 children, so small data errors can affect results.  
 NP Not published as less than 26 registered children in age group.

i) Percentages of children aged 1 year who are fully immunised by number not fully immunised and statistical area, 2011–12



ii) Percentages of children aged 2 years who are fully immunised by number not fully immunised and statistical area, 2011–12



iii) Percentages of children aged 5 years who are fully immunised by number not fully immunised and statistical area, 2011–12

