



DAD COULD FIND ALL THE
INFORMATION ABOUT THE
AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD
IMMUNISATION REGISTER ON
THE INTERNET...I JUST HAD
TO HELP HIM TURN THE
COMPUTER ON.





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AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATION REGISTER

Key business results

Over four million valid immunisations were recorded on the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (the Immunisation Register) and almost \$8.7 million was paid to immunisation providers during 2002–03.

More than 400,000 meningococcal C episodes were recorded on the Immunisation Register this year following introduction of the National meningococcal C vaccination program in January 2003.

Consistent with the maturing of the Immunisation Register, immunisation coverage rates were expanded to include an older cohort of children in the 72 to 75 month age range.

At a glance

Immunisation of Australian children 2000–01 and 2001–02

Australian Childhood Immunisation Register	2001–02	2002–03	% change
Number of children under 7 years registered at 30 June	1,860,689	1,844,679	0.9% decrease
Number of valid immunisation episodes recorded	3,582,703	4,028,036	12% increase
Children 12–15 months age appropriately immunised at 30 June	90.2%	91.2%	1% increase
Children 24–27 months age appropriately immunised at 30 June	88.1%	89.3%	1.2% increase
Children 72–75 months age appropriately immunised at 30 June	80.6%	82.3%	1.7% increase

Overview

The Immunisation Register is a national online database which was established in January 1996. Its aims are to increase the level of immunisation coverage for children under seven years against vaccine-preventable diseases capable of causing serious complications and even death, to promote age-appropriate childhood immunisation in Australia through the provision of payments and information, and to improve the level of immunisation service delivery.

Details of vaccinations given to children under seven years in Australia are recorded on the Immunisation Register and are available upon request to the provider, the parent or child's guardian.

The Immunisation Register was enhanced to record Meningococcal C vaccinations as an amendment to the *Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule* from 1 January 2003.

Changes were also made to support the catch-up provisions of the National Meningococcal C vaccination program for children born since 1 January 1998.

First and second readings of the *Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2003* occurred in March 2003. The Bill proposes changes to the legislation governing the Immunisation Register arising from recommendations to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing by two national immunisation committees, that immunisations given to children while overseas should be able to be recorded on the Register.

Pending passage of this legislation and Royal Assent, the Immunisation Register will be able to contain a complete immunisation record for more children. It will also assist parents of children immunised overseas, to claim the Australian Government child care benefit and maternity immunisation allowance. At present, these immunisations cannot be recorded on the Immunisation Register.

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), immunisation records for children under seven years of age have previously been forwarded to the Immunisation Register after they are processed by the ACT Health Department's Immunisation Unit. Plans to decommission the ACT's immunisation processing function were brought forward immediately following the January bushfires in Canberra so immunisation providers could report immunisation services directly to the Immunisation Register.

At 30 June 2003, 1.8 million children under seven years were recorded on the Immunisation Register and 27,188 immunisation providers had supplied information since its inception in 1996.

How information in the Immunisation Register is used

Health professionals use the Immunisation Register to monitor immunisation coverage levels and service delivery, and to identify regions at risk during disease outbreaks.

The data also:

- enables immunisation providers and parents to check on the immunisation status of an individual child, regardless of where in Australia the child was immunised;
- forms the basis of an optional immunisation history statement which informs parents and guardians of their child's recorded immunisation history;
- provides information about a child's immunisation status to help determine payment of the child care benefit and the maternity immunisation allowance;
- provides feedback and incentive payments to registered general practitioners who monitor, promote and provide age-appropriate immunisation services to children under seven years in their practice; and
- provides reporting mechanisms to assist the Australian Government's monitoring of national immunisation programs.

Challenges

An independent evaluation about the operations of the Immunisation Register was completed in 2003. HIC will take advice from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Management Committee in its response to the evaluation's findings and recommendations.

Challenges for the Immunisation Register include promotion and uptake of improved immunisation electronic lodgement data streams for immunisation providers and the establishment of long-term strategies to improve data collection and immunisation coverage rates. HIC will undertake the setting up of longer-term strategies in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Management Committee and stakeholder participation.

HIC will continue to work closely with immunisation stakeholders to improve complete and timely reporting of data to the Immunisation Register. For example, reductions in the time taken by providers to report immunisation services and in the numbers of children receiving late immunisations (not age-appropriate to the Australian standard vaccination schedule) will improve immunisation coverage rates reported by the Immunisation Register.

Education and promotion

Parents

Initiatives include:

- changes to Immunisation history statements provided to parents and guardians as their child turns one, two and five years of age, and at any other time at their request, to include details of meningococcal C vaccinations notified to the Immunisation Register;
- publishing information about the Immunisation Register in a number of parent and family magazines and outlets, including HIC's *Your Health Matters*;
- attending expos and health information days; and
- publishing a five-step guide on how to access immunisation history statements.

Immunisation providers

Promotional material aimed at immunisation providers includes:

- information about the National meningococcal C vaccination program and changes to the General Practice Immunisation Incentives scheme via the Immunisation network newsletter;
- new guides and publications to assist providers accessing the secure side of the website; and
- maintaining and enhancing the website.

HIC staff also participated at forums for immunisation provider groups.

