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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

2 February 2010

\$5.4 Million to Manage Asthma in Schools

The beginning of the 2010 school year provides a timely reminder for parents and school communities to be prepared and informed about asthma.

Each February there is an increase in the number of children who need treatment for asthma. The same increase is seen in the Northern Hemisphere when children return to school after long summer holidays and smaller spikes occur after shorter holidays.

The rise in asthma associated with returning to school may be due to the exposure of children to respiratory viruses, or because they have not kept up their asthma medication properly over the holidays.

If you have a child with asthma, you can be prepared by having an up-to-date individual Asthma Action Plan from your GP, and by ensuring prescribed medication is being taken correctly.

The reminder comes as a new \$5.4 million initiative is set to begin - ensuring schools and pre-school communities are better equipped in the management of asthma and other respiratory conditions.

The Asthma Child and Adolescent Program (ACAP) builds on the reach of the Asthma Friendly Schools Program, providing information and emergency response training not only for asthma - but for linked respiratory conditions such as allergy and rhinitis.

The program will extend asthma information and training to pre-schools, and provide a specific focus on support for self-management in adolescents.

The new assistance for schools is part of the Rudd Government's \$22.6 million commitment for the ongoing Asthma Management Program - which supports active self-management by people with asthma, community education and promotes best practice treatment by health professionals.

Asthma is a serious condition affecting more than 2 million Australians. It can cause recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing.

For information and support for asthma management, or for further information on the availability of staff training, contact your local Asthma Foundation on 1800 645 130.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.