18 May 2015

Dear parents, principals and staff,

**RE: Cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in Scone affecting all ages**

Local GPs and Public Health are continuing to see an increase in pertussis cases in Scone over recent weeks. There is also an increase in pertussis cases across New South Wales.

Note that children and adults who have been immunised can also get pertussis but symptoms are often milder.

Pertussis (whooping cough) is notifiable to Public Health by doctors, school principals and child care directors in New South Wales.

### What is pertussis?

Pertussis is an infection of the throat that can cause bouts of coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties and vomiting. It is easily spread through coughing. It can be a very serious infection in small children. It usually starts with a snuffle or a cold. The coughing can last for many weeks.

To help prevent this infection spreading, people who have been diagnosed with pertussis **should not attend school** until they have completed the first 5 days of a course of the recommended antibiotics. If antibiotics cannot be taken, then they must not attend for 3 weeks after onset of the cough.

The link to the NSW Health pertussis fact sheet is provided below and can be accessed in different languages


Public Health staff are asking the community to access the above information and to be aware of the signs and symptoms of pertussis and seek medical attention.

Pregnant women are now being offered free vaccine in their last 3 months of pregnancy to protect newborns that are too young to be immunised.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to call the Public Health Unit on 4924 6477.

Yours sincerely

Dr David Durrheim, Service Director Health Protection
Hunter New England Population Health