

## *Update on Human Swine Flu*

By 22 June 2009, Queensland, along with the rest of Australia will move to a new PROTECT response phase to manage the outbreak of Human Swine Flu.

The PROTECT phase recognises that Human Swine Flu is not as severe for the general population as originally envisaged. Most people are making a rapid and full recovery.

The new phase focuses on protecting those people who are most at risk of developing severe illness from Human Swine Flu. This includes pregnant women, Indigenous Australians, those with respiratory disease (asthma, COPD), heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, morbid obesity and immunosuppression.

Carpentaria Shire residents are urged to continue following normal flu precautions to limit the spread of this virus in the community. These precautions include.

- stay home when you are sick
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand gel
- wash your hands prior to touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- when coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues which should be disposed of immediately
- don't share items such as cigarettes, glasses or cups, lipstick, toys or anything which could be contaminated with respiratory secretions
- maintain at least one metre distance from people who have flu-like symptoms such as coughing or sneezing
- consult your doctor if you have a cough and fever and follow their instructions, including taking medicine as prescribed
- if attending a medical practice or hospital emergency department, telephone beforehand so that they can arrange for you to be seen away from other people.

People who fall into the identified vulnerable groups should follow the above advice, be mindful of flu-like symptoms and consider avoiding mass gatherings.

## **What does the new PROTECT phase mean for schools?**

### ***Up to the end of Term 2, 26 June 2009***

- A seven-day school exclusion period is still advised for students returning from areas of concern (USA, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Panama and the state of Victoria).
- School closures will continue in confirmed cases of Human Swine Flu.

Queensland's Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, said that Queensland's efforts to restrict the spread of Human Swine Flu have so far been very effective.

"This extra week of school closures, followed by school holidays, will further limit spread of the virus and its potential impact on school and Queensland communities," Dr Young said.

### ***Following 26 June 2009***

- Students entering Queensland from areas of concern will no longer be advised to stay away from school unless they are unwell.
- Except in special circumstances, schools will no longer be routinely closed if a student has confirmed Human Swine Flu.

Throughout the winter season, parents are strongly encouraged to keep their children home from school if they are unwell or have flu-like symptoms.

Carpentaria Shire Council is continuing to liaise with Queensland Health to ensure the community is responding to Human Swine Flu in the most effective and appropriate manner.

If you have any questions regarding symptoms or illness, contact your general practitioner or call Queensland Health on 13 Health (13 43 25 84).