

Health is everyone's business

Paul Nicolaou



Sydney has had another alert that vaccine-preventable measles could again be on the loose in our city.

You might wonder why a business advocacy group would be concerned about this. It's simple.

We don't only focus on making Sydney a successful and prosperous city that supports jobs and businesses. Sydney also needs to be a healthy city, especially when it involves the wellbeing of our children.

So, we should all be concerned that vaccination rates against preventable diseases are too low.

Health authorities have sounded the alarm that Australia is experiencing the biggest rise in whooping cough in 35 years.

More than 82,000 cases were

reported in 2024-25 and Sydney has been identified as a hot spot for an illness that can kill.

We can't afford to let vaccination rates fall below protective levels, but that is where we are at present.

It's not the first time we've been here. In the mid-1990s, childhood immunisation rates had also fallen to an alarmingly low level. Then-federal health minister Dr Michael Wooldridge launched a successful campaign to stem the decline but it looks like we're falling behind again.

Across Australia, childhood immunisation rates are below the 95 per cent target for all ages.

In NSW, 91.5 per cent of one year olds are fully immunised but only 89.6 per cent of five-year-olds are fully protected.

There are parts of Sydney that

are considered hot spots for vaccine-preventable diseases.

Being protected from infectious diseases is taken for granted because the threat might not be as visible as it was for past generations.

Older Sydneysiders will remember what it was like living in fear of the scourge of conditions such as polio and diphtheria.

Our health system encourages parents to make sure their children are fully immunised.

The bottom line is we should all support health authorities in their efforts to keep our city and nation safe.

Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney