

## MEDIA RELEASE

4 September 2018

### **Schools across Australia get help to support children with type 1 diabetes**

A new diabetes in schools education and training program will make it easier for teachers and staff to support children with type 1 diabetes, and give parents confidence that their children will be safe and supported at school.

Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, at Mornington Park Primary School in Melbourne announced funding of \$6 million over two years to develop and deliver the program through the National Diabetes Services Scheme.

A nationally consistent training program for teachers and school staff will be targeted at every school with a student with type 1 diabetes and this will cover the safe administration of insulin, hypoglycemia (low blood glucose level) management, and “normalising” diabetes in schools so the students are not stigmatised.

The program will be developed with opportunity provided for input from a wide range of stakeholders. It will also clarify the legal framework for diabetes management in schools as currently there is confusion about who can train school staff, and which school staff should be trained.

Diabetes Australia CEO Professor Greg Johnson said parents and diabetes services were delighted with the funding for the new program which will reduce stress on both parents and teachers, leaving schools and students to get on with the job of learning.

“Schools, teachers and school staff have been doing a good job with the resources and training currently available but it is clear they need more structured support and a nationally consistent framework,” Professor Johnson said.

“Too often we hear that the child has to miss their lunch time dose of insulin because no one is confident to give the injection

“Type 1 diabetes is a serious and complex condition requiring round-the-clock management, monitoring and support – including while at school - and this program will give teachers and school staff the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to support the kids.

“On behalf of families with type 1 diabetes, and the entire diabetes sector, Diabetes Australia would like to say thank you to the Federal Government and Health Minister Greg Hunt for listening to the diabetes community and delivering.”

Dr Joanne Ramadge, CEO of the Australian Diabetes Educators Association said the program would see the same level of training rolled out nationally.

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“The program will provide nationally consistent education across three levels of training, including basic information about type 1 diabetes and its effects on children and their family,” Dr Ramadge said.

“School staff who are most responsible for the day-to-day supervision of children with type 1 diabetes will have access to targeted online training in key areas such as recognising the symptoms of hypoglycaemia and how to respond to high and low blood glucose levels.”

Australian Diabetes Society CEO A/Professor Sof Andrikopolous said a lack of consistent policies or guidelines had created an environment of confusion and uncertainty.

“There is confusion at schools and amongst parents and it is a problem that has persisted for many years so it is great that the Federal Government is supporting a solution,” A/Professor Andrikopolous said.

Dr Elizabeth Davis, Vice President of the Australasian Paediatric Endocrine Group, said maintaining regular diabetes management during the school day was critical to short- and long-term outcomes.

“It is important children with type 1 diabetes receive the insulin treatment prescribed by their health care professional while at school,” Dr Davis said.

“In extreme and rare circumstances diabetes can be fatal if not managed properly.

“Additionally, in the short to medium term, inadequate management of diabetes can negatively impact on a child’s ability to learn and, in the long term, persistently high blood glucose levels increase the risk of diabetes complications such as eye, nerve and kidney damage.”

JDRF Australia CEO Mike Wilson said the program would take some of the burden of diabetes management off parents.

“In some cases, parents have been forced to leave the workforce so they can visit the school every couple of hours to support their child’s diabetes management and administer insulin,” Mr Wilson said.

“We hope the training the Program provides will give parents peace of mind while their children are at school.”

The program is supported by the key national health professional and consumer diabetes organisations including Diabetes Australia, the Australian Diabetes Educators Association, the Australian Diabetes Society, the Australasian Paediatric Endocrine Group and JDRF Australia.

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