



Media Release

1st August 2007

Anaphylaxis Australia urges WA Government to Act on Anaphylaxis Guidelines

Anaphylaxis Australia Inc (AAI) is urging the West Australian government to act on the recommendations of the WA Anaphylaxis Expert Working Committee to implement minimum safety standards to prevent the death of children from anaphylaxis.

Presented to the Health Minister in November 2006, Anaphylaxis Australia is advocating for these strategies to be adopted nationally, to prevent food induced anaphylaxis deaths in schools and early childhood services. Even though the Health Department in West Australia initiated the formation of an expert working committee to put together recommendations, it has been over eight months since the report went to the minister and AAI has received no response. Already, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have promised improved safety.

Maria Said, President of Anaphylaxis Australia said that even though deaths are rare, food induced anaphylaxis is not uncommon. "The incidence of children with anaphylaxis is increasing and government policy concerning the health and safety of children in West Australian schools and early childhood services needs to be updated to ensure minimum standards are in place to protect the wellbeing of our children."

"There needs to be a coordinated response to allergy management in the community. Access to medical services must be improved and all health professionals, including GP's, dietitians and nurses need to be better informed so that they understand safe management of those at risk of anaphylaxis. The best way to protect children is to ensure they are promptly and properly diagnosed, and that staff at their school or childcare service receive annual training on preventing an anaphylactic reaction, recognising symptoms of a reaction and, importantly, how to administer the lifesaving EpiPen adrenaline auto-injector," reiterated Ms Said.

An estimated 3-5 percent of pre-school aged children are allergic to one or more of the common food allergens and the number is on the rise. American and UK studies have shown a 2-3 fold increase in peanut allergy in young childrenⁱ and a more recent Australian study reported a "dramatic increase" in hospital admissions for anaphylaxis, particularly in young infantsⁱⁱ.

"Deaths from anaphylaxis in schools and early childhood services should never happen. With proper management and training of all staff, death is preventable," said Ms Said. "The West Australian government needs to act now to ensure the state doesn't fall behind in its care and management of allergy and anaphylaxis."

For further information or interviews, contact: Jodie Wrigley, Growing Daily Communications
Ph: 02 9969 5511; 0402 303 555; jodie@growingdaily.com.au

About Anaphylaxis Australia Inc

Anaphylaxis Australia Inc is a non-profit, Australian charity, which was formed in 1993. AAI's mission is to increase awareness of anaphylaxis through education, research and support. The organisation works with health and teaching professionals, members of the food industry and all who are touched by life threatening allergy so that, together, we can improve the quality of life of allergic consumers nationally. For more information, visit the AAI website: www.allergyfacts.org.au or call 1300 728 000.

ⁱ The Medical Journal of Australia media release issued 17 June 2007

ⁱⁱ Paediatric food allergy trends in a community-based specialist allergy practice, 1995–2006