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A safer future for children with severe allergies – New legislation for teachers and childcare workers.

More than four years after the death of Hamidur Rahman whilst on school camp in NSW and two years after the death of 4 year old Alex Baptist, Anaphylaxis Australia Inc (AAI), the only national support body for those who have severe allergy has succeeded in its Victorian legislation campaign to ensure teachers and childcare workers are trained in the recognition, daily management and emergency treatment of children at risk of severe allergic reactions or anaphylaxis. AAI applauds Premier Bracks who has promised legislation surrounding the education of teachers and childcare workers and funding to support this initiative over a four-year period.

This legislation in Victoria will mean that there are minimum standards of care for children at risk of anaphylaxis from preschool right through secondary school in both the private and public sectors. "This is a huge step forward and we eagerly await the implementation of legislation so that there is increased safety for children at risk, their teachers and childcare staff," stated Maria Said, President of Anaphylaxis Australia Inc

Up to 10 Australians die each year from anaphylaxis and thousands more require urgent medical attention including prompt administration of adrenaline. Strict avoidance of the food trigger is the only way of preventing a food allergic reaction.

"Whilst many strategies can be implemented to reduce the risks, individuals with severe allergy and their carers know that risk cannot be totally removed and that education is crucial. Regular education and training of all teachers and childcare workers is a must," reiterated Said.

The promise made by the Victorian Bracks government has been made for good reason. Anaphylaxis Australia membership has been lobbying government for many years. Factors that have assisted AAI in their plea for legislation include:

- The coronial inquest into the death of Hamidur Rahman (whilst at school camp in NSW) in 2003
- The pending inquest in Feb 2007 into the death of 4 year old Alex Baptist who died in a Victorian childcare facility in September 2004
- Documented school and childcare emergencies
- A growing numbers of allergies to common foods such as peanut, milk, egg, sesame and shellfish.

Said confirms that, "NSW departments of Health, Education and Training and Community Services have to date refused to acknowledge the need for legislation despite it being recommended by NSW State Coroner Milledge in September 2005.

Maria Said concluded saying, “Children spend half their waking hours in the care of others. School and childcare communities do play an important role in helping keep children and young people with allergies safe. We look forward to the implementation of legislation in Victoria as a matter of priority and urge other states and territories around Australia to take the issue of safety of children with severe allergy and their carers seriously”.

Mandatory training on anaphylaxis management in Victoria will bring some comfort to parents who are rightly anxious about their children’s safety when away from home. Death from anaphylaxis is preventable if people are correctly diagnosed, educated and cared for by those who can help minimise the risk of a reaction. It is important know how and when to administer an EpiPen® (an auto injector containing a single pre measured dose of adrenaline) according to the individual’s Anaphylaxis Action Plan in an emergency before rapid transport to hospital via ambulance.

Information for schools and parents is available from Anaphylaxis Australia www.allergyfacts.org.au, as well as organisations such as Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) at www.allergy.org.au

For more information on

Allergies and Anaphylaxis see

- Anaphylaxis Australia Inc
www.allergyfacts.org.au
or call 1 300 728 000.

- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) at
www.allergy.org.au

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Anaphylaxis Australia Inc (Formerly FACTS) 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 organization 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