



Amanda Rishworth MP

Member for Kingston

MEDIA RELEASE

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INFLUENZA SEASON: CALL FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES WITH A FREE VACCINATION

Amanda Rishworth, Member for Kingston, today said older Australians in their local community should take steps to protect themselves from potentially life threatening winter illness - and have their annual free influenza shots.

"Last year, 2.57 million Australians over the age of 65 received the free flu vaccinations from their GPs, at clinics or in aged care facilities across the country, Amanda said.

"In the last five years, influenza and pneumonia were responsible for 2.5 per cent of all deaths in Australia - and in 2006 resulted in 2725 deaths – making it the 12th highest cause of death.

"Flu can be very serious for any age group but older people can be more susceptible to influenza complications, like pneumonia.

"Influenza can also complicate existing illnesses such as diabetes, heart conditions and severe asthma – with people needing to be hospitalised when conditions became life-threatening," Amanda said.

The Government not only recommends annual vaccinations for people 65 years of age and over, but provides them free of charge to this age group under the Program.

The Government has provided \$26.2 million for the influenza vaccine program.

Further information is available on the Fight Flu web site developed by the National Institute of Clinical Studies. The address is www.fightflu.gov.au

The influenza season usually commences in late-May and continues until September.

For further information contact Amanda Rishworth MP **Phone** (08) 8186 2588
232 Main South Road, Morphett Vale 5162 **Email** Amanda.Rishworth.MP@aph.gov.au