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KEEP SCHOOLS MUMPS-FREE IN 2018

Queensland parents are being urged to keep their children's vaccinations up-to-date as youngsters return to schools and childcare centres across the state.

Last year Queensland experienced one of its worst outbreaks of mumps in years and doctors are determined to avoid a repeat in 2018.

AMA Queensland President Dr Bill Boyd said that even though Australia had one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, it was vital that parents followed the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule.

"Ensuring your child is up-to-date with their vaccinations helps to protect them and the broader community from diseases like measles and mumps, which can spread rapidly," Dr Boyd said.

"Last year we saw a huge spike in mumps in Queensland – a disease that can trigger meningitis and cause infertility and deafness.

"Vaccination rates in much of the state – including Brisbane and the Gold Coast – are still below the 95 per cent national target and until we hit that we will continue to have outbreaks of mumps and other preventable diseases."

There were 399 diagnosed cases of mumps in Queensland in 2017, compared to just 62 in 2016 and 46 in 2015.

Dr Boyd said many of today's parents would have been too young to remember regular outbreaks of diseases such as mumps and measles and may be complacent about the threat they pose.

"Because these diseases are rarer today they are perhaps easier to disregard," Dr Boyd said.

"However, every parent needs to be aware of the risks their children face and understand what jabs their little ones need to have and when.

"There are lots of apps that can be downloaded – like *VacciDate* and *Save the Date to Vaccinate* – which clearly outline the vaccination schedule for the first four years of a child's life.

"GPs can answer any questions about childhood immunisations and address any concerns that parents may have.

"Kids will get sick at day care or school – that's inevitable. But ensuring they are vaccinated gives them the best possible chance of avoiding preventable diseases."

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