

# Flu scare hotline to jab advice

Health authorities are looking at ways to beat vaccination fears

NATASHA BITA  
CONSUMER EDITOR

A HOTLINE for patients to alert health authorities of vaccine side-effects is likely to be set up in the wake of last year's flu immunisation scare.

The parliamentary secretary for health and ageing, Catherine King, yesterday described as patchy the existing system of reporting complications — either through GPs, health clinics, state health departments or the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

"We need to fix these holes in the system," she said.

"I think it is really important that people have absolute confidence in the vaccination system and immunisation.

"As a parent of a very young child myself, I know how important it is to understand who to report to, when to report and how that information gets to the people who need to make a decision."

Ms King said she was "attracted to the notion" of setting up the nation's first vaccine safety committee, suggested by former chief medical officer John Horvath in his recent review of the flu vaccination debacle.

His report revealed that health authorities took five weeks to suspend the seasonal flu vaccination for children after receiving the first report of a febrile convulsion in March last year.

Febrile fits were later found to have occurred at 10 times the usual rate, leaving Perth toddler Saba Button with brain damage.

Ms King said a hotline for doc-

tors, nurses and patients to call would be a "simple and cost-effective solution".

"It was clear from the Horvath report there are some flaws in the system," she told *The Australian*.

"It is really important that when there is a clear signal that there is an adverse event that warrants intervention, it happens in a timely manner.

"There were instances (last year) where GPs and health nurses didn't know who to ring."

Ms King said she expected the TGA — for which she is responsible — would have a "robust vaccine system in place" by the end of this year.

Professor Horvath said yesterday that both the medical profession and the public needed "more education" about reporting side-effects.

"I don't think health professionals are always well enough informed as to how they can do it."

Professor Horvath said a real-time system of reporting complications should replace the existing vaccine surveillance system, which was designed in the early 1990s to deal with a small number of "tried-and-true vaccines".

He said it was important that the public was able to report concerns directly to health authorities via a hotline or email.

The TGA has told a Senate estimates committee it received 15,833 reports of "adverse events" from medicines and vaccines last year. But the TGA only makes the details public upon request from the Office of Medicines Safety Monitoring.

Fluvax — the influenza vaccine that triggered last year's immunisation scare — is not being used for children younger than 10 this flu season.

# New translation of liturgy launched to mass applause



JANE DEMPSTER



JACK TRAN

Father Greg Morgan, left, of Sydney, and Father Tim Norris of Geebung in Brisbane, both used the new translation at mass yesterday

TESS LIVINGSTONE

A CATHOLIC priest of almost six decades and another on his first service both praised the new English translation of the liturgy celebrated at Sunday mass for the first time yesterday.

Tim Norris, 82, and Greg Morgan, 24, agreed the translation was richer and more devotional, and had been well received.

Father Norris, ordained in Rome in 1955, and who said mass in Latin for his first 10 years as a priest, found the new version much easier.

"It's wonderful to be going forward with an excellent translation we didn't have before," said the parish priest of St Kevin's Geebung, on Brisbane's northside.

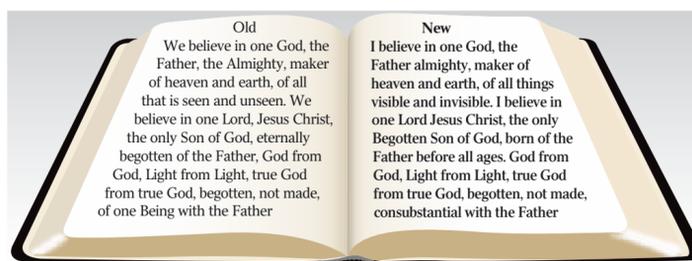
"So many priests and people felt let down in the late 1960s — not by the loss of the Latin or the fact that the priest had to face the people, but because so much richness was lost.

"The new text will have a transformative effect, invoking a strong sense of the sacred. It will make people think about Christ's sacrifice as it is relived in every mass.

"The language is so different from everyday speech, and will turn people's minds and hearts to the mysteries of the faith."

Father Morgan, one of five priests ordained in Sydney on May 20, said young priests and mass-goers he met were "nothing but positive" about the translation.

"The difference between the two translations is incredible, with the new one being so rich and



beautiful," said Father Morgan, who elected to use the new translation for his first mass at St Christopher's Holsworthy in southwestern Sydney.

"The mass is an act of worship and the language should reflect

that. It is a very exciting time to be a priest."

The translation, the biggest overhaul in church liturgy since the old Latin rite was replaced after the Second Vatican Council more than 40 years ago, was insti-

gated by Pope John Paul II. The text was written by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, and overseen by the Vox Clara committee, chaired by Australia's Cardinal George Pell and including representatives

from the US, Canada, Britain, Ireland, India, Africa and the Caribbean.

Cardinal Pell, the Archbishop of Sydney, said the first masses in the new translation had gone smoothly at Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral, and he had good feedback from parishes. "People are quietly appreciative," he said.

Many parishes began to use the new text yesterday on Pentecost Sunday, but they have until the first Sunday of Advent in November to make the full transition.

Not everyone is happy. In the National Council of Priests' magazine *The Swag*, Melbourne priest Eric Hodgens condemned what he called "the non-consultative and politically motivated superimposition of a new, defective translation of the liturgy".

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