Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Dear Parents and Staff,

A person who attends Leumeah Public School has been diagnosed with whooping cough. I am writing to provide you with information about this illness and ask that you watch for the symptoms, especially over the next three weeks.

If you/ your child develops symptoms, please go to your local doctor as soon as possible, taking this letter with you.

A person with whooping cough is infectious for the first 3 weeks of illness but is no longer infectious after 5 days of antibiotic treatment. The coughing can last between one and three months.

To help prevent this infection spreading, people who have been diagnosed with pertussis should not attend school until they have completed a five day course of the recommended antibiotics. If antibiotics cannot be taken, then they must stay away for 3 weeks after onset of cough.

The people most at risk of severe disease are:
- Infants < 12 months of age, regardless of vaccination status
- Children < 2 years who have received fewer than 3 doses of pertussis vaccine
- Pregnant women in the last third of their pregnancy (because they could infect their newborn).

Most children are immunised against pertussis as it is a standard childhood immunisation. However immunity to the disease is not guaranteed with vaccination in some people and does decrease with time. It is important to note that although your child may be immunised, they may still become infected. Please ensure that younger children at home have their whooping cough immunisations up to date.

For more information, please see the attached Pertussis factsheet or contact the Infectious Diseases Officer at Sydney South West Area Public Health Unit on 9515 9420.

Yours sincerely,

For:
Dr Stephen Conaty
Acting Director
Sydney South West Area Health Service
Public Health Unit