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****** Senator Colbeck Raises Awareness for World Vaccination Week ******

Tasmanian Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck has acted to help lift flu immunisation rates by getting his flu vaccination administered by a local community pharmacist.

A recent Pharmacy Guild study showed an alarming 50 per cent of Australians were not planning to be immunised this year, while only 43 per cent were aware they need a flu shot every year to achieve maximum protection against the disease.

Senator Colbeck received his flu vaccination at Priceline Pharmacy Devonport, highlighting just how easy it is to access this very important health service through community pharmacies.

“On World Vaccination Week the Coalition Government is reminding all Australians that vaccinations are some of the most effective public health interventions in the world,” Senator Colbeck said.

“We are doing everything possible to ensure that people are protected this flu season, which is why the Coalition government is offering free vaccines for people aged over 65.”

Free vaccines are also available for shingles and pneumonia.

Pharmacist Terry Travers said having Senator Colbeck as a flu vaccination customer sent an important message to the community, particularly given the recent survey results of about only half of Australians planning to have a flu shot this year.

“This demonstrates the ease of access to vaccinations through pharmacies, making it that much simpler for anyone to get their flu shot,” Mr Travers said.

“Our customers can just come to our pharmacy and organise their protection against this year’s flu strain.

“It is so much easier and more convenient than having to go to the doctor, getting a prescription, taking it to the pharmacy to be dispensed, and then returning to the doctor to get the injection.

“Now people are able to come into our pharmacy and in a very short time get their vaccination and be protected against this disease.

“Last year we saw about 250,000 people being infected with the flu. Around 18,000 Australians are hospitalised due to the flu each year with 3,000 dying. Everyone needs the protection of a flu shot.

“Also the community needs to remember that when they protect themselves they also help to protect the community by stopping the spread of the virus.”

Mr Travers said in the time that community pharmacists had been administering the vaccine there had been a high percentage of people being vaccinated for the first time.

“In the past they have not been able to take the time of having a vaccination done through a GP,” he said.

Mr Travers stressed that pharmacists giving the shot had to undergo special training.

“This ensures we have the knowledge and skills to both deliver the vaccine safely and effectively, as well as being able to identify and treat any possible side effects.”

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