



Foreword

Tony Abbott

The most arresting brief I have so far received was that from the Chief Medical Officer, Professor John Horvath, about the potential threat of an influenza pandemic occurring. The brief warned of the far from hypothetical risk of a new disease that could infect up to 25% of the population in the first 3 months of a moderate outbreak in Australia.

Since February 2004, the Commonwealth Government has taken this threat just as seriously as it would a threat to national security, and has implemented a series of precautionary measures that mean Australia is better prepared than almost any other country in the world to deal with a new influenza strain if it emerged.

This supplement provides a snapshot of the latest research and preparations being undertaken in Australia to adequately respond to an influenza pandemic should it occur. A range of health professionals explore planning to counteract a possible pandemic; the biology and history of the influenza virus; the clinical manifestations of influenza; laboratory diagnosis; the role of antivirals, vaccine development, non-pharmaceutical interventions, and infection control in a pandemic; and the crucial role of general practice.

I expect this supplement to generate debate among health professionals and the general community as we all grapple with our roles, responsibilities and possible responses to a potential pandemic influenza outbreak.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tony Abbott'. The signature is stylized, with a long horizontal line above the first name and a large, looped 'A' for the last name.

Tony Abbott

Australian Government Minister for Health and Ageing

