

Government's Preparation for Bird Flu Outbreak Welcome

The priority the Federal Government is placing upon preparation for the possibility of a bird flu outbreak is critical and timely, Medicines Australia said today.

The Prime Minister will arrive in Malaysia today where he will discuss the issue with 16 counterparts at the East Asia Summit.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, this week announced a further \$185 million package of measures to increase the nation's capacity to respond to major health emergencies such as an influenza pandemic.

"Medicines Australia's vaccine and anti-viral producers are working closely with the Government and its agencies in preparation for avian influenza hitting our shores," the Chief Executive Officer of Medicines Australia, Kieran Schneemann, said today.

"While products such as Tamiflu and Relenza are already in existence, and their manufacturers are preparing to ramp up production, a vaccine or vaccines would need to be created based upon the strain of the flu. Australia has contracted with two manufacturers, sanofi pasteur and CSL to supply vaccine in a pandemic.

"Australia is playing a leadership role in the region, which is doubly important because it should help reduce the chances of an outbreak in a neighbour country then crossing to Australia.

"The Australian pharmaceutical industry stands ready to further assist the Government in supplying vaccines and anti-virals to Australians and others living in the region," Mr Schneemann said.

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