



Otago
District Health Board
Poari Hauora-ā-rohe ki Ōtāgo



Influenza A (H1N1)

Media Update No 11

31 May 2009

"An article in today's edition of the Sunday Star Times suggesting that there is no public health team at the border responding to potential cases of Influenza A H1N1 also known as swine flu, is incorrect" says Dr Derek Bell Otago and Southland District Health Board Medical Officer of Health.

"Staff from Public Health South have met all international flights at both Dunedin and Queenstown airports since early May and will continue to do so while the strategy of keeping this new virus out of the country continues to be successful" he said.

Since the Ministry of Health activated its national response centre at the end of April public health staff have been at all New Zealand airports to meet international flights from areas of concern. These include Mexico, United States, Canada, Japan and as of this weekend Australia. While Auckland and Christchurch airports receive flights from all over the world, Dunedin, Queenstown and Wellington airports have trans-tasman flights only.

Currently, there are flights from Australia into Queenstown and Dunedin twice a week and public health nurses are present to support border agencies, monitor passengers as they disembark and answer any questions for each of these. By the end of June the number of flights into Queenstown will increase to 14 per week.

"Our task, now that Australia has an increasing number of confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza and the risk of community level transmission is growing, is to ensure that all these flights are monitored and the appropriate public health response is undertaken" says Dr Derek Bell.

The National Influenza Pandemic Action Plan is to try and prevent community spread of disease for as long as possible. This strategy will enable people and organisations to complete their planning and helps keep hospitals doing elective work instead of treating cases of influenza.