

First Nationwide Child Health and Air Pollution Study Commences

The Australian Child Health and Air Pollution Study (ACHAPS) will investigate the relationship between air quality and respiratory health by testing 3,200 students from 60 primary schools across Australia.

This is the first nation-wide study of child health in relation to air quality to be conducted in Australia.

Primary school children, aged between 7 and 11 years, living in ACT, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales will be invited to participate in the research study.

A/Professor Guy Marks, Chief Investigator and Head of Epidemiology group, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research said, “The aim of the Australian Child Health and Air Pollution study is to get a better understanding of the effect of air pollution on breathing problems, asthma and allergies in Australian children.

”Air pollution is an important public health issue and this study will help us identify how the levels of air pollution seen in Australian cities influence the respiratory health of children.

“Current Australian air quality standards are based on overseas data. This study will show if these standards adequately protect the health of Australian children.

“The results of this study will give us a wealth of information that can be used to shape future policies on air quality.”

Each child will undergo some simple breathing tests and an allergy test. Parents will also be asked to fill in a questionnaire about the child’s health and home environment. Test results for each child will be available on the day of testing.

The study has been commissioned by the Environment Protection and Heritage Council so they can better inform the air quality standard setting process and the management of pollution.

The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council. It is being conducted by Professor Gail Williams (University of Queensland), Professor Rod Simpson (University of the Sunshine Coast), Associate Professor Guy Marks (Woolcock Institute of Medical Research) and Associate Professor Bin Jalaludin (University of NSW). Field work will be conducted by staff from the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research who will be assisted by staff from state and territory Environment Protection Authorities/Departments of Environment and Conservation.

People can learn more about the study by visiting www.woolcock.org.au/achaps or telephoning 1300 889 618.

Visuals: Children undergoing breathing and allergy tests can be filmed at Sydney's Woolcock Institute - 10.30am, Wednesday 18th. Please call Lucy Williams if you wish to attend.

For further information call Lucy Williams, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research mb 0403 753 028