Public Health Act 2005

Introduction

*Transcript of a video clip of Dr Linda Selvey introducing the major concepts of Public Health Act 2005.*

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Running Time: 2.47 minutes

The new Public Health Act has come about as a result of an extensive review of the current public health provisions in the *Health Act 1937*, and this review actually started more than 10 years ago. And it has been very important to do this to make sure that the provisions in the Public Health Act are responsive to the public health needs that we have today, such as new diseases, new potential environmental risks and so on, but also that they’re acceptable to what the community currently expects of legislation.

It’s very important that it provides basic safeguards necessary to protect public health, and it does through the range of chapters which people will be giving you information about. And these objectives can only be achieved through cooperation with a range of stakeholders, including both state and local government, health care providers and the community. So it’s been very important to involve these stakeholders in consultation about the development of the Public Health Act, and also its implementation.

The Public Health Act has been on the agenda for some time, but was progressed rather rapidly in response to some needs that were identified through the influenza pandemic planning process, because it was acknowledged that the *Health Act 1937* provisions were inadequate to deal with a potential pandemic.

And there are two areas in the Public Health Act that are really important in the context of a pandemic. One is the new public health emergency provisions which provide specific powers to the Minister in the event of a declaration of a public health emergency, that will enable us then to do the things that may need to be done in the event of a pandemic, as well as potentially other public health emergencies. And also the controlled notifiable diseases provisions; so we’re talking there about specific notifiable diseases for which there will be additional powers, enabling; to protect the public from others who may have a condition which could be passed onto others, such as pandemic influenza.

So these are going to be very important and the Public Health Act altogether, will be implemented through a staged implementation process. But because of the potential threat of an influenza pandemic, the provisions in the Public Health Act that are important for pandemic will be implemented sooner than the others, so it will actually implemented in December of this year (2005).