MEDIA RELEASE

24 April, 2015

NRL star Johnathan Thurston backs program to vaccinate against the flu

NORTH Queensland Cowboys player Johnathan Thurston has lent his support to this year’s “Tackle Flu Before It Tackles You” program.

The public health program is aimed at protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aged over 15 years, from the complications of influenza (commonly known as the ‘flu’) by providing them with a free influenza vaccine.

“Tackle Flu” clinics will be held in locations across the Darling Downs, South Burnett and South West Queensland regions in the coming weeks.

Last year, more than 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were vaccinated against the flu as part of the program.

In 2015, Darling Downs Public Health Unit director Dr Penny Hutchinson hopes to see more people vaccinated this year.

“A lot of people don’t realise how serious the flu is and the complications that can occur,” Dr Hutchinson said.

“These complications can lead to hospitalisations and even death. Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait community are at a higher risk of developing these complications.

“The flu can affect anyone, even first grade rugby league players, so we hope all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will follow Johnathan’s lead and get vaccinated this year.”

During the clinics, eligible people who receive their flu vaccination will receive a free shirt designed by Roma artist Michael McGuane.

The Tackle Flu Before It Tackles You program is a partnership between the Darling Downs Public Health Unit, the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, the South West Hospital and Health Service, Darling Downs South West Queensland Medicare Local and the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation.

All organisations thank Mr Thurston and the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation for their support of the program.

The Tackle Flu Before It Tackles You clinics will be held in the following locations:

1. **CHERBOURG:** Monday, 27 April from 9am to 12pm at the Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council building
2. **CUNNAMULLA:** Wednesday, 29 April 2015 from 2pm to 6pm at the Paroo Shire Supper Room

3. **CHARLEVILLE:** Thursday, 30 April 2015 from 9am to 1pm at the Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Community Health (CWAATSICH) 94 Edward Street

4. **QUILPIE:** Friday, 1 May from 9am to 1pm at the Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Community Health (CWAATSICH) 49 Brolga Street

5. **WARWICK:** Monday, 4 May from 3.30pm to 6pm at the Warwick High School

6. **OAKEY:** Tuesday, 5 May, from 10am to 1pm at Oakey Goondir, 110 Campbell St Oakey

7. **DALBY:** Wednesday, 6 May from 10am to 2pm at Goondir Dalby, 4 Jimbour St Dalby

8. **GOONDIWINDI:** Thursday, 7 May from 10am to 2pm at the MacIntyre Child and Family Health building, Goondiwindi Hospital

9. **ROMA:** Monday, 11 May from 2pm to 4.30pm in the Community and Allied Health Building, 59-61 Arthur Street, Roma

10. **MITCHELL:** Tuesday, 12 May at the Mitchell Show in the Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Community Health (CWAATSICH) van from 11am to 2pm

11. **ST GEORGE:** Wednesday, 13 May from 2.30pm to 4:30pm at the St George State High School

**Captions:**

Tackle Flu Staff: Wearing the 2015 ‘Tackle Flu’ shirt are (from left) Roslyn Wharton-Boland, Teresa McGorm, Karen Taylor, Karen Brown, Barbara Griffiths from Darling Downs South West Queensland Medicare Local, Dr Penny Hutchinson and David Fraser from DDSWQ Medicare Local.

Johnathan Thurston Tackle Flu: Legendary North Queensland Cowboys football player Johnathan Thurston is the face of this year’s Tackle Flu Before It Tackles You campaign.

**Ends**

**MEDIA:** Contact Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Media Team 4699 8547, 0438 702 328 or DDHHS_media@health.qld.gov.au