Applying your learning in a scenario

Professor Julie Leask AO
School of Public Health, University of Sydney
Sydney Infectious Diseases Institute
Visiting Professorial Fellow, NCIRS

Australian Vaccinology Course
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THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

SABII. Social and Behavioural Insights in Immunisation

CRICOS 00026A

Aims of this session

Take part in a hypothetical scenario where you:

- Apply evidence on the strategies that increase uptake
- Apply the principles of public risk communication to a vaccine safety event

The characters and scenarios are a mixture of fact and fiction

You will play roles

Form groups

The Minister for Health and her office

Program managers

Aboriginal Community Controlled peak body

Newsmedia organisation

Immunisation Supporters Network

Vaccine Injury Network

- 10 people per table
- Elect a group leader and spokesperson
- Listen to each unfolding scenario
- Discuss your reactions and decisions (you can talk to other groups, if needed)
- Share these with the larger group
- Be prepared to be challenged
- Be creative, have fun

Timepoint 1 July 2027

- Australia is experiencing is largest influenza season since 2017.
- There have been a large number of cases and hospitalisations of children
- Three young children have died within a month. Parents of Nessa Cayman share their experience publicly.
- NCIRS reports low vaccination coverage
- Newsmedia reactions focus on misinformation.



Flu kills three young children

PETA RULE and DEBBIE GUEST

Three children have been killed by the flu in Perth in the past few days, prompting experts to issue an urgent warning that parents should take their children to the doctor as soon as they show signs of the illness.

The three children were all under five and lived in the metropolitan area. It is understood each of them died within 24 hours of showing the first signs of the flu, which doctors say was a form of the common influenza A strain. They warned that listlessness, cough and fever were the key symptoms parents should look for and urged them to seek medical advice immediately.

"While we do not want to create unnecessary panic, it is important for parents to be aware that the disease

Doctors across the State have been warned that they may be inundated by worried parents, prompting the Health Department to advise them of the details of the deaths.

Australian Medical Association president Geoff Dobb said influenza A strain was one of the most common during winter and that West Australians were particularly vulnerable because it had been several years since the last flu epidemic.

He said parents should not be worried if their children simply had a runny nose and headache, though they should look out for a fever above 38C.

"The critical thing is the combination of a fever and a cough," he said. "What we're talking about here is not just having a runny nose and feeling unwell, often people refer to that loosely as having the flu. A true influ-



THE DAILY HERALD OPINION A13

SELFISH DUMMY MUMMIES NEED CONSCIENCES PRICKED!

Timepoint 2
August 2027

Prime Minister announces “Facts Not Fiction” campaign to inform and educate parents about flu vaccination.

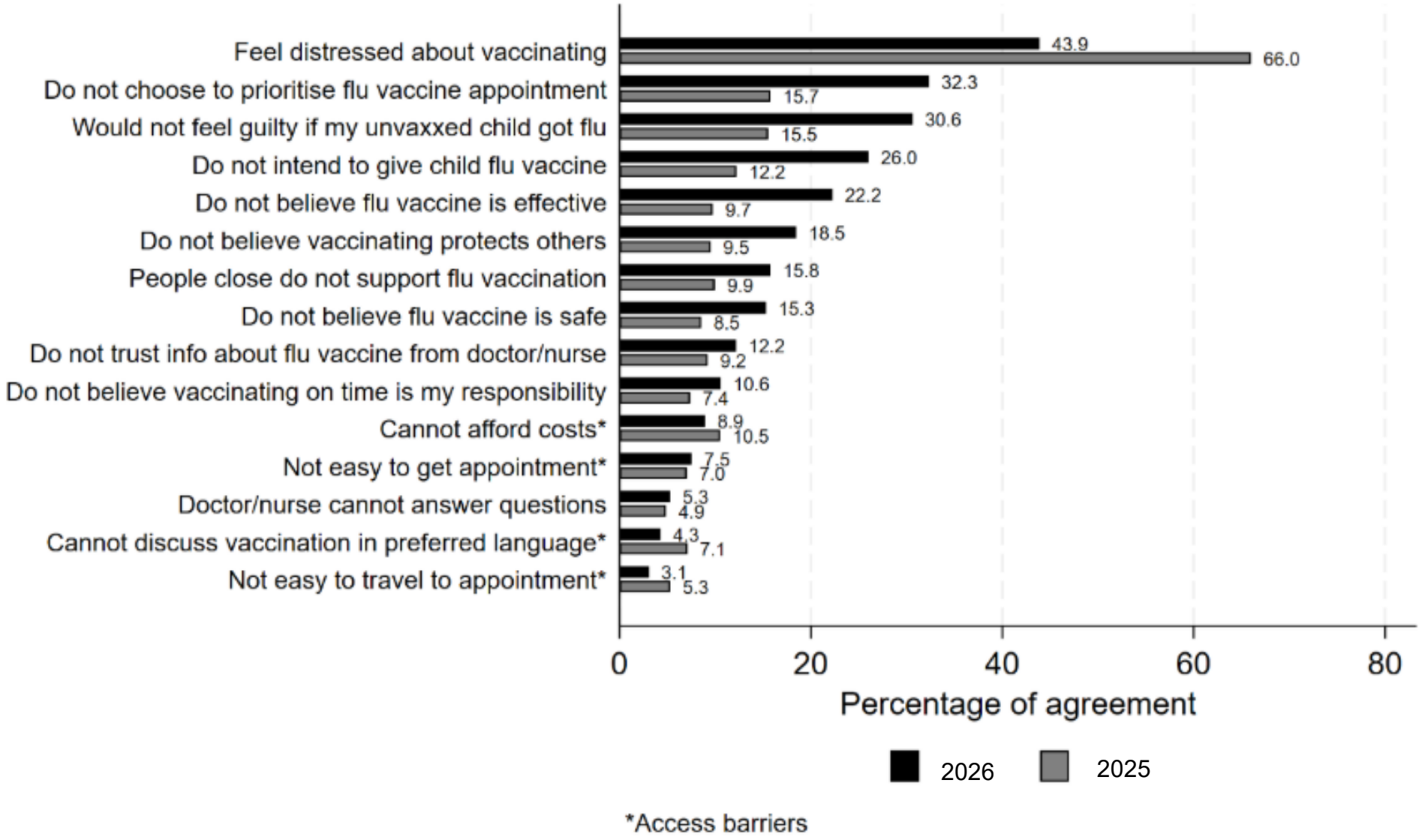
Campaign includes pamphlets, social media tiles, television advertisements.

“We are committing $2 million to the **Facts Not Fiction** campaign.”



Timepoint 2

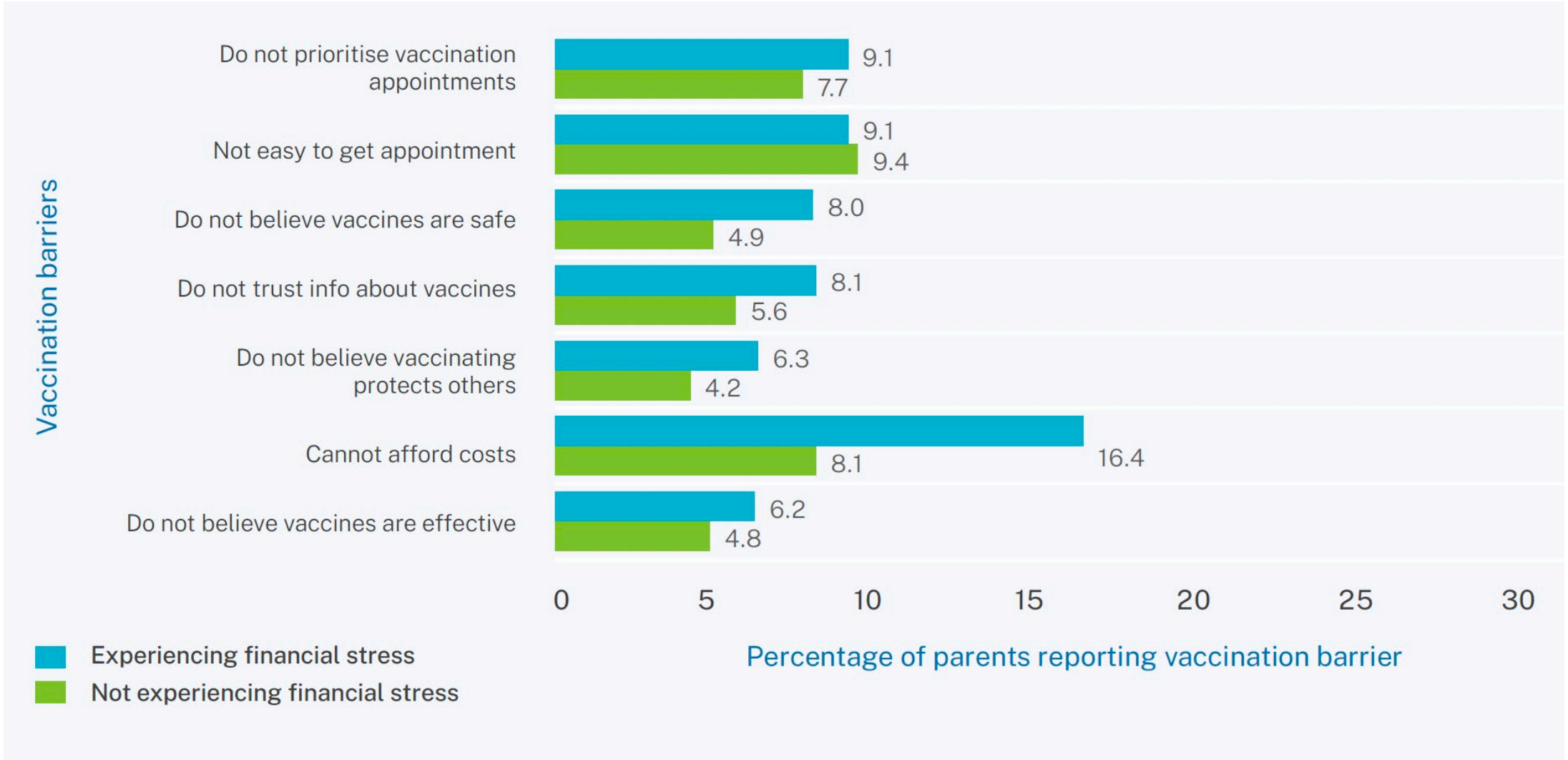
Report on new research from the *National Vaccination Insights Project* on national sample of 2000 caregivers.



National Vaccination Insights Project

Financial stress amplifies the barriers

National Vaccination Insights Project



Data from routine immunisation survey

Weighted data

How does your group respond?

Take 10 minutes

The Minister for Health and her office: decide on your response

Program managers: prepare dot points for policy brief

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health peak body: prepare for a communique for the Minister's Office

News media organisation: write down 4 interview questions for an expert

Immunisation Supporters Network: prepare a media release

Vaccine Injury Network: discuss what you want to know and what you plan to do

Date	Action
2026	New formulation flu vaccine recommended and free on NIP for children aged 6-59 months
19 March 2027	Official launch of the seasonal influenza vaccination program. WA has a concerted campaign.



Date	Action
31 March 2027	Reports of febrile convulsions received by WA
13 April 2027	WA Health Advises TGA that it has reports of febrile convulsions. TGA requests documentation.
20 April 2027	First tranche of reports sent to TGA.

Parents recount flu jab nightmare

By Amy Simmons and Brigid Andersen

More and more parents from around the country are recounting horrific flu jab experiences amid mounting controversy over adverse reactions to the seasonal flu vaccine.

Australia's chief medical officer, Professor Jim Bishop, has urged doctors not to use the vaccine on children under five, following more than 250 reports of adverse reactions - a figure experts and parents fear is being severely underestimated.

In Queensland, health authorities are also investigating the death of a two-year-old Brisbane girl, which may be linked to the flu vaccine.

As the vaccine saga unfolds, whether or not to vaccinate has also been a hot topic in online parenting forums such as Essential Baby, where hundreds of mothers and fathers have expressed their fears and detailed nightmare stories of their children's reactions.

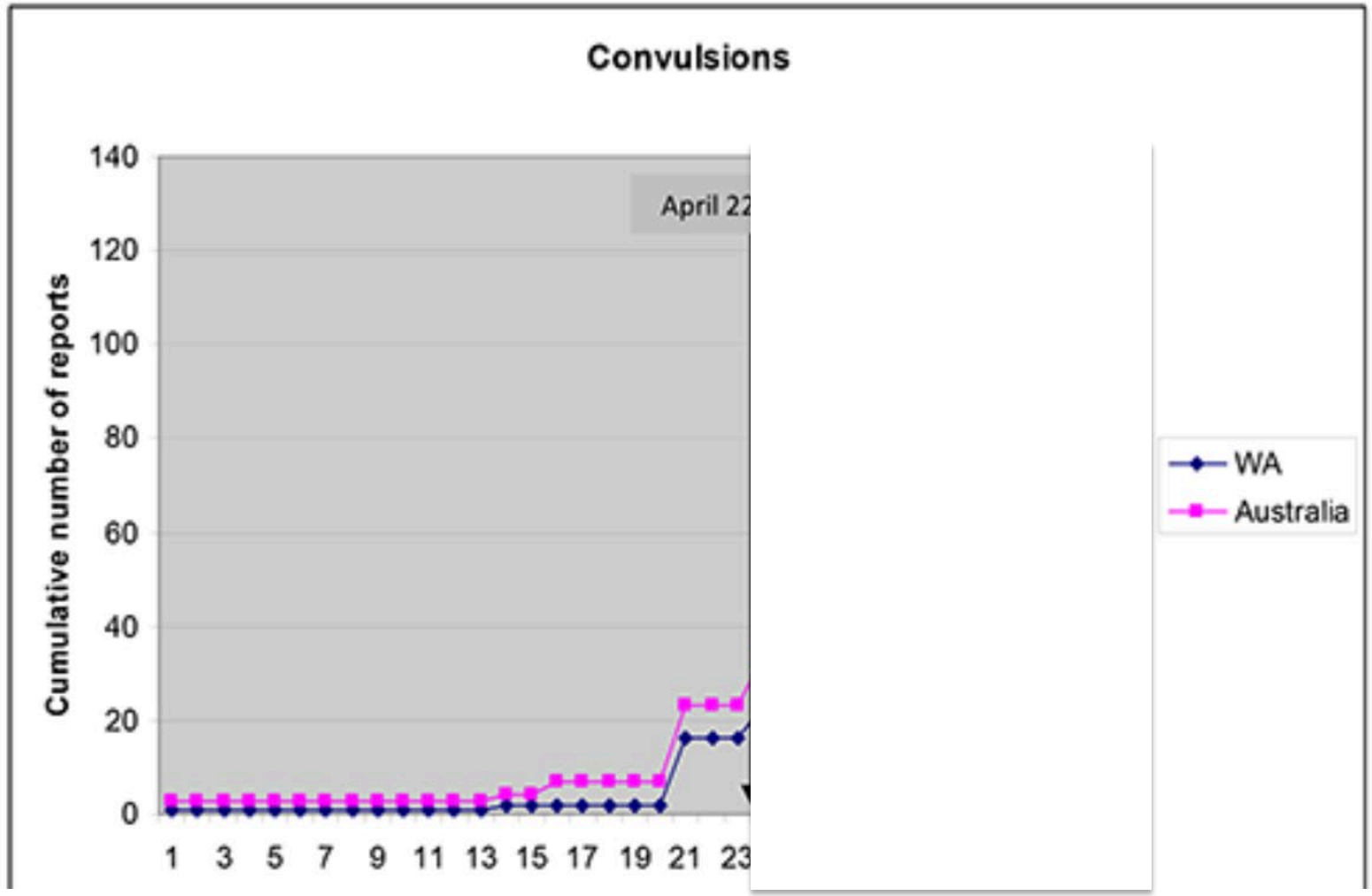
Perth mother Marrisa Moir told ABC News Online her two-year-old son began gagging and squealing in the bath about four hours after having the flu vaccine on April 9.

She says Rohan, who has Global Developmental Delay with hypotonia - a condition where milestones are not met at expected ages - has regressed since the ordeal.



Marrisa Moir's two-year-old son Rohan suffered a 30 minute febrile convulsion after receiving the seasonal flu vaccine on April 9, 2010. (Marrisa Moir)

Figure 1 Cumulative reports of convulsion



How does your group respond?

Take 10 minutes

The Minister for Health and her office: Take advice and plan your response.

Program managers: Brainstorm your strategy

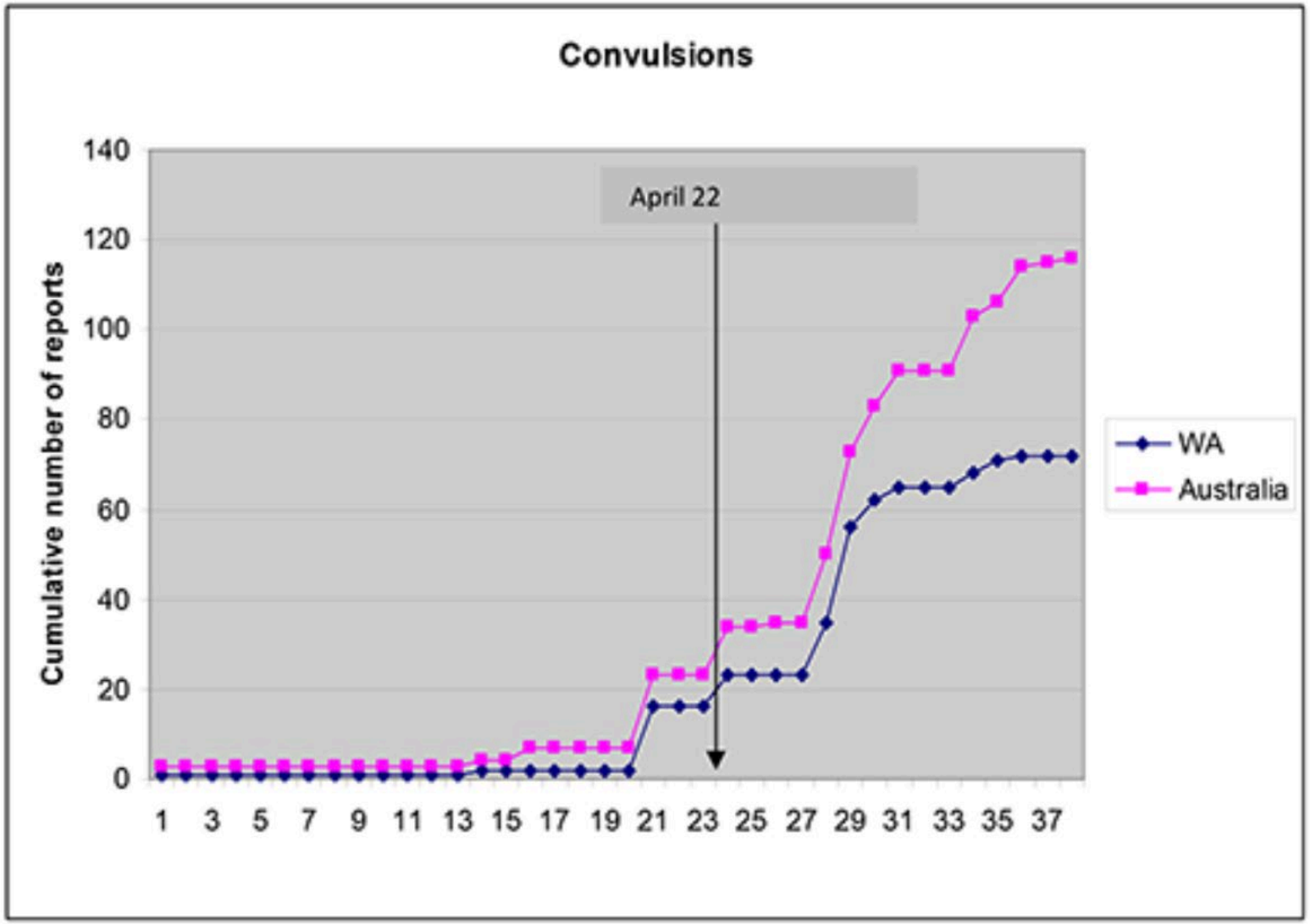
Aboriginal Community Controlled Health peak body: prepare some key messages for communities

A news media organization: Decide on your news angle and assign roles to different reporters

Immunisation Supporters Network: Decide how you will respond

Vaccine Injury Network: Plan a Tik Tok video

Figure 1 Cumulative reports of convulsion



Date	Action
23 April 2027	National temporary suspension all seasonal influenza vaccines children <5 years
30 July 2027	One company suspends program. Other vaccine brands resumed.
March 2028	Influenza vaccine available.

How does your group respond?

Take 10 minutes

The Minister for Health and her office: How do you plan to rebuild trust?

Program managers: Debrief the event and what you would change

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health peak body: Decide on a plan for debriefing communities

A news media organization: Prepare a headline and lead sentence

Immunisation Supporters Network: Decide how you will respond

Vaccine Injury Network: Discuss your next course of action

END OF SIMULATION

DEBRIEF in GROUPS

1. What did you learn from taking on the group's perspective?
2. What would your group do differently with full knowledge?

Postscript of the actual events

- In April 2010 in Australia, 99 cases of febrile convulsions in children under 5 years of age.
- Causal relationship to administration of the Fluvax™ seasonal influenza vaccine which was then contraindicated in children aged <5 years and avoided in those aged <9 years.
- Subsequent investigations confirmed that no other TIVs were associated with this increased risk.

Horvath Report into suspension

Recommendation 6

Transparency and the Functions of the TGA to Ensure Better Access to Vaccine Safety Information for Consumers and Health Professionals

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/adverse-event-l~adverse-event-l-ch1



Criticisms of process

"There must be a system that provides **clear information to consumers** (not just health professionals) that enables them to make informed decisions about these kinds of vaccines based on available evidence and in recognition of the limitations of that evidence."

Carol Bennett, Consumers Health Forum, August 27, 2010. Croakey blog

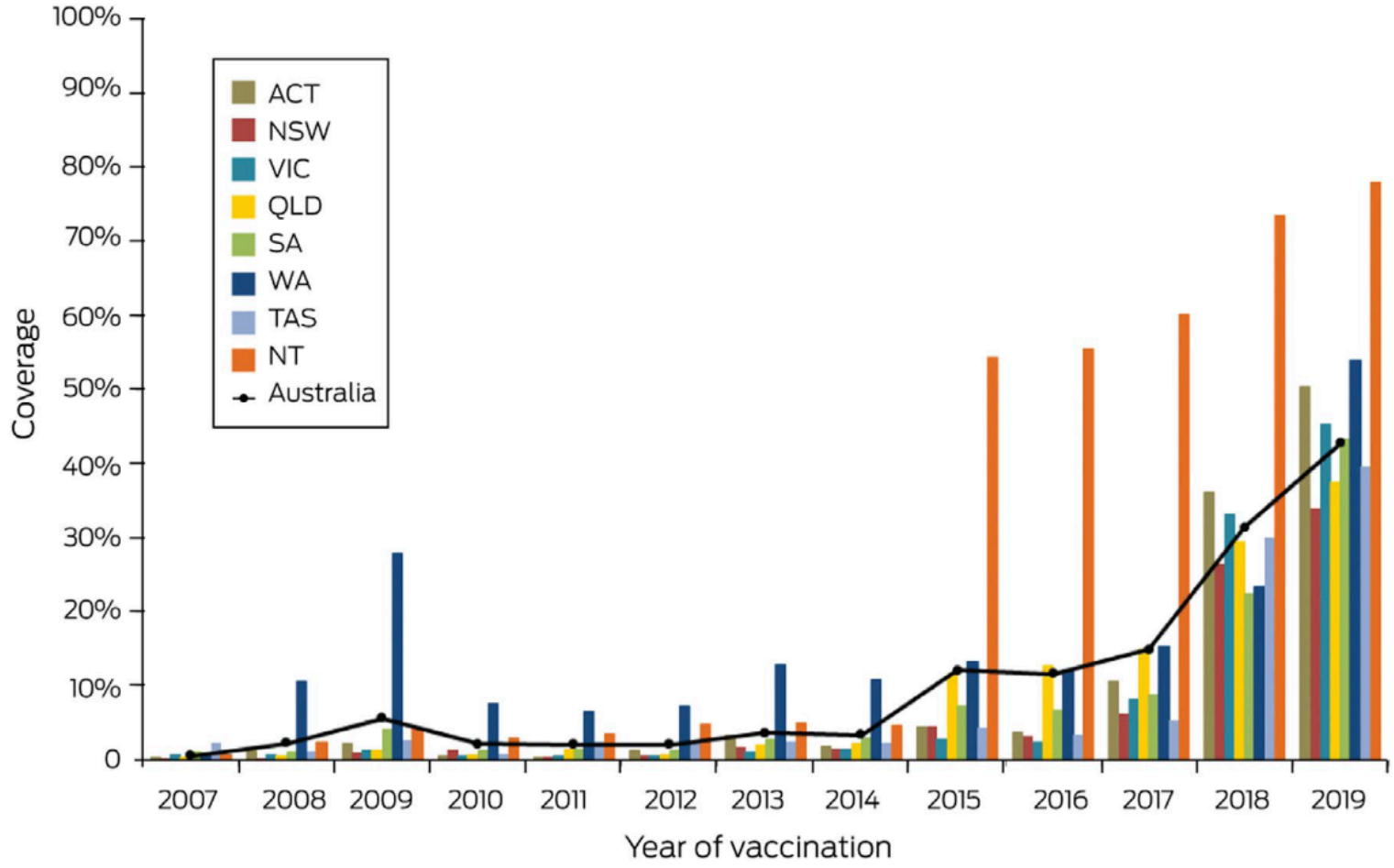
WA Health Department Consumer Project

Impacts

- Some providers were recommending to not vaccinate children at all
- Adults recommended flu vaccine were reluctant
- A handful of reports of doctors still giving Fluvax
- Influenza hospitalizations and deaths in children continued (6057 hospitalizations sentinel)
- Coverage remained low

Large impact on coverage, including in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

3 Trends in recorded coverage of any dose of seasonal influenza vaccine among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 6 months to less than 5 years, by jurisdiction, 2007–2019



ACT = Australian Capital Territory; NSW = New South Wales; NT = Northern Territory; QLD = Queensland; SA = South Australia; TAS = Tasmania; VIC = Victoria; WA = Western Australia. Source: Australian Immunisation Register, data as at 31 March 2020. ◆

Carlson SJ, Blyth CC, Beard FH, Hendry AJ, Cheng AC, Quinn HE, Leask J, Macartney K. Influenza disease and vaccination in children in Australia. *Med J Aust*. 2021;215(2):64-7 e1.

Parent responses: Catherine King's PhD research

FINDINGS

- Uncertainty and unease
- Interaction with existing perspectives
- Tried and true: the 'normal vaccines'
- 'Mind the gap' - the information void
- Bridging the gap – parental information preferences

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Proactive during incident
- Brave the discontent
- Tailor information
- Multiple dissemination including through mainstream media
- Target GPs and nurses and specialists
- Keep communicating even after the event

King CL, Leask J. The impact of a vaccine scare on parental views, trust and information needs: a qualitative study in Sydney, Australia. BMC Public Health 2017;17:106

Top-line recommendations

- Gather routine data on the drivers of uptake
- Have your strategies ready and share them
- Pause and look at the trends before you respond to a vaccine uptake issue
- Verify with data claims about declining confidence and the causes

The event:

- Have your risk communication plan ready BEFORE the event
- Consult with other stakeholders
- You don't always have to act right away, sometimes you need more information. BUT communicate early and often, even in face of uncertainty.
- Be ready for misinformation. Prebunk and debunk.
- Prioritise specific population groups
- Work with trusted spokespeople
- Establish diverse stakeholders before the event
- Communicate after the event too, don't just hope everyone forgets it.