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FOR RURAL HEALTH
NORTH COAST**
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MEDIA RELEASE

24 November 2015

Study will explore vaccination resistance in Byron Shire

Long-standing local resident, midwife and mother of four, Catherine Helps will soon begin interviewing parents who have decided not to vaccinate their children against diseases such as whooping cough, chicken pox and measles.

Mrs Helps is undertaking this PhD study through the University of Sydney. She will be looking at the reasons why some Byron Shire parents are opposed to the vaccination schedule endorsed by health authorities.

To gain a clear picture of community attitudes to vaccination, Catherine will also be interviewing GPs, schools and childcare providers, public health clinicians, alternative health practitioners, and community groups.

In a later phase of her study Catherine plans to meet with senior high school students to gauge the intentions of the next generation of parents towards vaccination.

“Byron Shire is one of the Australian communities with markedly higher rates of vaccination refusal, with pockets within this LGA having vaccination objection rates of more than 30 per cent,” Mrs Helps said.

“This clustering of vaccination refusal is a national, and indeed global, phenomenon whose reasons are poorly understood.”

She said the study will be conducted on a confidential basis and be an “open minded and respectful examination” of the topic.

“The aim is to gain an insight into the perspectives of parents who choose not to vaccinate their children. It will explore the vaccination trends within this community, and the influencing factors, as well as seeking to gauge the effect that living in our community has on the perceptions of childhood vaccination.”

Catherine is interested in why some parents start to vaccinate and then decided to stop, why parents decide not to vaccinate from the outset, and why some pregnant women might intend not to vaccinate their child.

For more information, please contact Catherine Helps at research@helps.com.au

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