

## Flu will spread, say health authorities

Victorian health authorities have moved to contain the "inevitable" spread of swine flu by closing a Melbourne school after two pupils were infected with the virus.

A 54-year-old Mexican woman visiting Melbourne has become the fourth person in Victoria to be quarantined with confirmed swine flu.

She joins three schoolboys, aged 9, 10 and 12, who tested positive to the virus after returning from a family holiday in Los Angeles.



Clifton Hill Primary School, attended by the two younger boys, has been closed. Their classmates and immediate family have been quarantined and treated with the anti-viral drug Tamiflu.

Acting Chief Medical Officer Dr Rosemary Lester said authorities decided to close the school about 10.30pm on Wednesday as a precaution, even though the children most at risk had been quarantined.

"It's a matter of closing the school to prevent that much lower risk to the other children versus the great social disruption that we know this causes," she said.

A high school, attended by the 12-year-old boy, will remain open because he was only briefly contagious and was not in close contact with other students.

Dr Lester said authorities were working to identify other people who had come into close contact with the boys and the Mexican tourist who may also be at risk.

"I think it's inevitable that we will have community transmission, we've seen in other countries that inevitably there is community transmission," she said.

"At this stage all we can do is employ our best efforts to ensure that we contain the disease as long as possible."

Two NSW people have also been confirmed to have swine flu.

The primary school, in Melbourne's inner north, will be closed until Sunday, seven days after the last infectious child attended.

That will be reassessed if another child develops symptoms.

Health authorities have also advised the school about cleaning common areas.

Victorian Premier John Brumby said authorities were erring on the side of caution in an effort to contain the disease.

"The cases that have been confirmed show that the swine flu is very typical of an influenza, it's no more serious than that, there's no cause for anyone to be panicking about these issues," he said.

"The cases have been relatively mild and the spread has been quite limited."

The Mexican tourist is in quarantine with her partner and adult son at a family member's home in Melbourne . She arrived in Australia on May 16, on a Sydney flight.

Dr Lester said she did not develop symptoms until May 19 and would not have been contagious on the flight but passengers were being contacted.

Test results from another suspected Victorian swine flu case are expected on Thursday.

So far 111 people have been tested.

Dr Lester said the swine flu threat was serious because Australians had no immunity to the disease.

It was potentially fatal in vulnerable people, such as the chronically ill and those aged over 65.

Mr Brumby said the systems put in place to control the outbreak were working, with the Mexican tourist seeking medical attention after receiving warnings about swine flu on the plane and at the airport.

Victorian Health Minister Daniel Andrews said it was important to note that none of the infected Victorian patients required hospitalisation and all were being treated at home.

"These are very serious matters but it is, at this stage, presenting as nothing more than an ordinary flu in terms of symptoms."