

Attainment of high immunisation coverage in the 4 year-old cohort in the City of Casey during May 2003 to February 2006

Summary

The City of Casey is the largest growing municipality in Victoria. Children aged 0 – 4 years old make up **8.3%** (approximately 18,701) of the total population.

The *CASEY IMMUNISATION CLINIC (C.I.C)*, (operating as part of the Narre Warren Clinic) opened in July 2003, with the expressed purpose of targeting the children of the City of Casey to improve its current overall immunisation status.

The Clinic's accredited Nurse Immuniser co-ordinated the program's implementation. The launch of the clinic was facilitated by a generic mail-out to Narre Warren Clinic's families as per existing database, post box drops of *C.I.C.* calendars, feature ads in the local paper, and even a short air time in the regional radio. The local council (City of Casey) was also approached to discuss the project, and contact was made with Maternal & Child Health Nurses and Child Care Centres within the 5-km radius.

During the latter part of 2004, the *C.I.C.* ran a feature ad in the local paper highlighting the 4-year old immunisation. The resultant effect of this initiative was the upsurge of the *C.I.C.*'s immunisation rate for the 4-year olds to **97.2%** for that quarter.

Efforts were then directed to improve the Clinic's recall strategy to achieve a diligent response particularly from the 4-year old group. A *CASEY IMMUNISATION* birthday card was introduced with an added touch of a balloon embossed with a number 4 on it; the cards are addressed to the child and are posted a week prior to the child's 4th birthday. This initiative has shown a steady increasing trend of fully immunised children within the 4-year old cohort (**95.7%** for November 2005 and **96.6%** for February 2006).

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Casey is about 35 kms from the Melbourne CBD, covering the metropolitan south-eastern growth corridor with 5 distinct geographic borders:

- to the north are the foothills areas of Lysterfield, Harkaway, and Narre Warren
- the NW pocket is classified as the main residential and commercial sector around the Princes & South Gippsland Highways which encompass Endeavour Hills, Hampton Park, and Berwick
- the south, east, and west are the current growth areas around the Cranbourne surrounds
- there are still the farm belts of Clyde, Devon Meadows, and Pearcedale along the SE corner
- the southern border being the Western Port Bay with coastal hamlets and reserves of Tooradin and Blind Bight

According to the City of Casey's demographics, its recent estimate of population is around 225 325, making it the largest growing municipality in Victoria (and third behind the Gold Coast and Brisbane City Councils). Children aged 0 – 4 years old make up **8.3%** (approximately 18,701) of the total population.

The inception of the *CASEY IMMUNISATION CLINIC* came about in July 2003, with the expressed purpose of targeting the children of the City of Casey to improve its current overall immunisation status. At this time, both Local Government's and Medical Practitioners' immunisation rates were just above the 90 % mark.

At the outset, it appeared that the group of 4 year olds in this community were not presenting for immunisation till they were almost 5 years of age - - - the notion being that these children were supposed to have their “pre-school needles” as they were about to start primary school. Indeed, there were also children who were being deferred by their parents from starting school for another year and therefore were not presenting for immunisation until well over 5 years of age!

A significant challenge which further emerged was the increasing expectations by parents to have a more one – on – one contact with the immunisation provider so as they can process the bulk of information relating to vaccines in use, hence, empowering them to better give informed consent. There are parents who now felt that the Council sessions were too impersonal for them, or that their GPs were far too busy to be imposed upon by their need for more information.

THE C.I.C. MODEL:

In response to this changing trend of parents seeking to have an improved immunisation service available as a choice, the *CASEY IMMUNISATION CLINIC* came into being. The service delivery model is such that the immunisation procedure itself is to be administered by an accredited Nurse Immuniser, following a brief pre-immunisation consult with the GP and medical consent obtained from the accompanying parent(s) / guardian. The Nurse Immuniser reinforces the appropriate information, allays any fears, and gives post-immunisation briefings. There are 2 x 2-3 hours dedicated immunisation sessions a week, usually by appointment although the *CLINIC* is always pro-active with opportunistic immunisation encounters and catch-ups when many situations have arisen.

The *C.I.C.* is essentially a part of the Narre Warren Clinic which is an established medical practice in the City of Casey with a holistic approach to family medicine. As such, there is already an existing administrative support structure comprising of a team of reception staff and a computerised data system. The expansive premises allowed for a designated waiting area, separate from the main lounge which provided a reassuring effect to anxious parents / children. This is also complemented by a play area and a change-cum-feeding room.

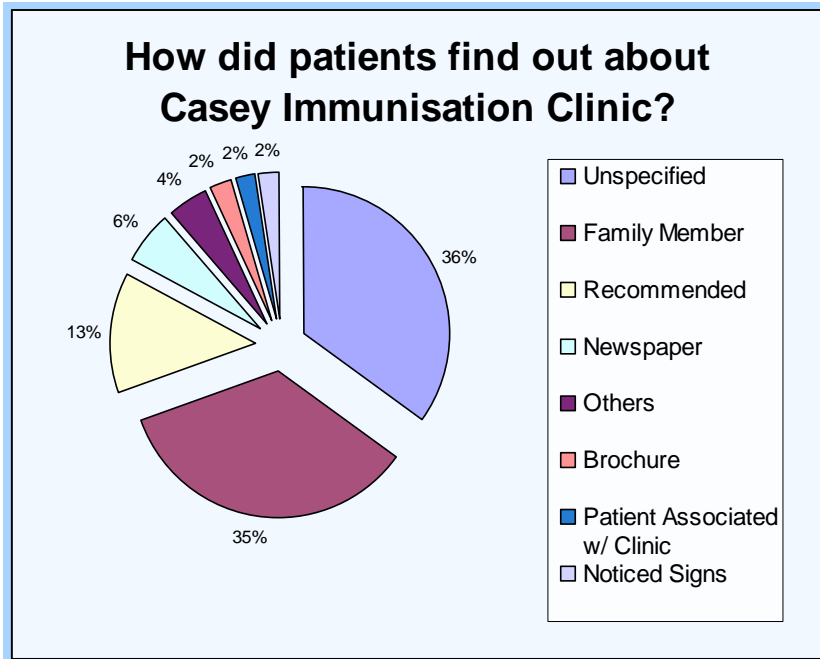
The launch of the *CLINIC* was facilitated by a generic mail-out to Narre Warren Clinic’s families as per existing database, post box drops of *C.I.C.* calendars, feature ads in the local paper, and even a short air time in the regional radio 97.7fm Casey 3SER . The project was mainly driven by the accredited Nurse Immuniser, who had approached the health services of the City of Casey, welcoming the project and considering it a positive partnership in the improvement of the area’s immunisation coverage. In addition, contact was made with the Maternal & Child Health Nurses and Child Care Centres within the 5-km radius.

To fund the set-up and initial outlay costs of the *C.I.C.*, finances were tapped from the resources of the parent company of the Narre Warren Clinic. The *C.I.C.*, to date, is mostly self-funding from Medicare incentive payments (i.e. bulk – billing / immunisation items) and boosted by the Service Information Payments (SIP), Practice Incentive Payments (PIP), and the quarterly Outcomes Payments (WPE).

C.I.C. & THE PRE-SCHOOLERS:

Thus far, the *CASEY IMMUNISATION CLINIC* has been accorded with increasing patronage from the many young families in the Casey wider community over the last two and a half years. Our patient database has indicated a rise in numbers of new parents opting for their children to attend the *C.I.C.*





Source: Narre Warren Clinic – Casey Immunisation Patient Type .vs. Medical Director Data Base (Mean Average August 2003 to April 2006)

The *CLINIC*'s immunisation encounters are all reported by electronic on-line access to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) on a weekly basis. Monthly SIP and PIP payments advice are monitored, which have constantly reflected accurate data input as shown in nil returns for clarification. We utilised the GPII 020A Reports regularly to earmark children who are overdue with their immunisations. Our quarterly GPII Feedback Statements have been testimonies to the high immunisation rate of the *CLINIC* – the latest overall re-calculation figure for the February 2006 quarter being **96.1%** as compared to the Division's **89.3%**.

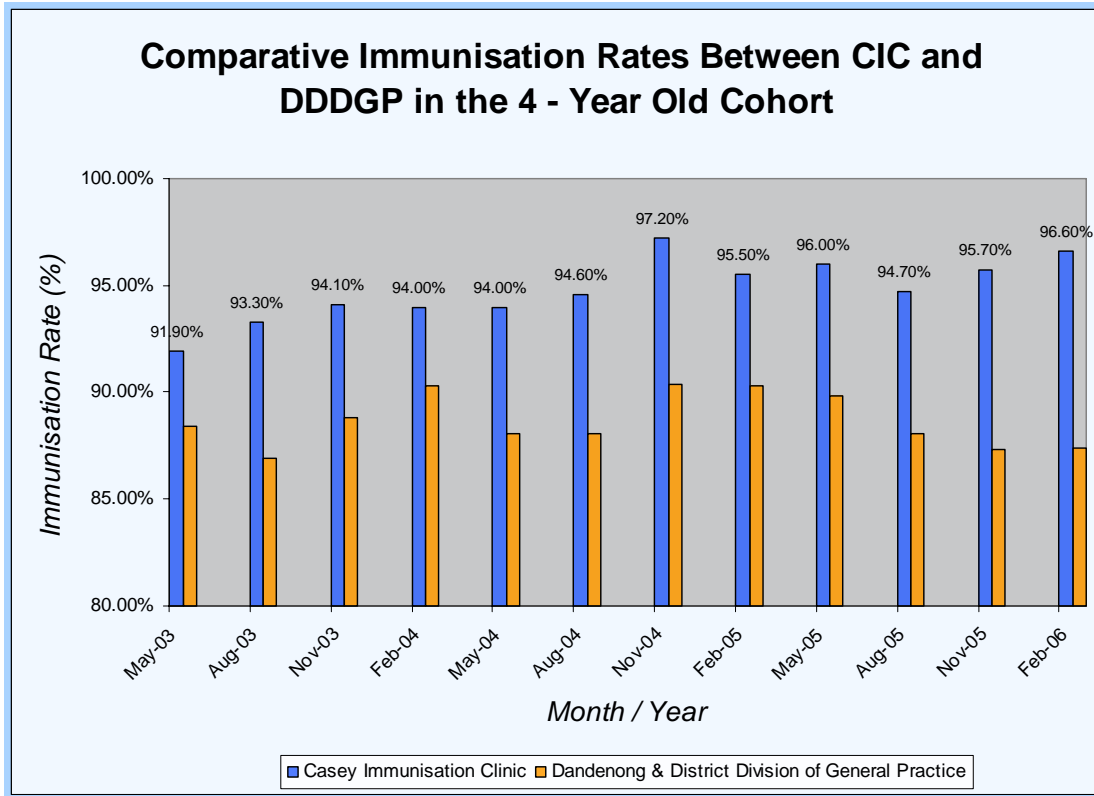
Whilst the *C.I.C.* prides itself with its modest achievement in maintaining its high immunisation coverage, the core challenge remains on how to better capture the 4-year old cohort in the Casey community. The mindset of the “pre-school immunisation” is historically strong, compounded by the inevitable factor of the huge time – lapse between the child's last immunisation encounter and the pre-school requirement. Although there is a recall system within the Narre Warren – *CASEY IMMUNISATION CLINIC*, it seems the message varies in terms of urgency to many parents.

During the latter part of 2004, the *C.I.C.* ran a feature ad in the local paper highlighting the 4 –year old immunisation as the correct immunisation age for the children's booster for Tetanus / Diphtheria / Whooping Cough + Polio + Measles / Mumps / Rubella regardless if the child is delaying school entry. The *CLINIC* also ran a sponsored Information Meeting in October of that year, aimed mainly at the Maternal & Child Health Nurses in the area, to raise their awareness to this issue as well as to introduce the addition of the 7-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine to the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule due for January 2005.

The resultant effect of this initiative was the upsurge of the *C.I.C.*'s immunisation rate for the 4-year olds to **97.2%** for that quarter (please refer graph on this page – November 2004). The figures hovered and fluctuated for the subsequent six months, until it notably dropped to **94.7%** for the August quarter. Evidently, the Division's figures have also simultaneously dropped!

CASEY IMMUNISATION CLINIC then decided to invest time and serious effort in improving our recall strategy to achieve a diligent response particularly from the 4 –year old group. We borrowed the post-card idea from the Be Wise & Immunise campaign by customising our very own Narre Warren Clinic – *CASEY IMMUNISATION* birthday card with an added touch of a balloon embossed with a number 4 on it; the cards are addressed to the child and are posted a week prior to the child's 4th birthday.

The same graph below substantiates the positive outcome of the C.I.C.'s birthday card initiative, with the trend now on a steady increase of fully immunised children within our 4-year old cohort (95.7% for November 2005 and 96.6% for February 2006). It must be mentioned that the C.I.C. again held a sponsored Information Meeting for the local Maternal & Child Health Nurses in October 2005 with the dual purpose of introducing the 18-month old varicella inclusion in the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule due for November 2005, as well as reinforcing the 4-year old scheduled immunisation. The cessation of using the live Oral Polio Vaccine was effected with this change in the schedule. This now means that all Victorian 4 year olds are to get their boosters in the form of the combined Diphtheria / Tetanus / Pertussis / Inactivated Polio (Infanrix-IPV)® and the multivalent Measles / Mumps / Rubella (Priorix)®.



Source: GPII Quarterly Feedback Statements, Medicare Australia

SUZIE MARQUEZ
CASEY IMMUNISATION – NARRE WARREN CLINIC
Cnr Narre Warren North & Prospect Hill Roads
Narre Warren, Vic. 3805
Tel. (03) 9705 4444

*HELEN FISHER
The WAVERLEY MEDICAL CENTRE
244 Springvale Road
Glen Waverley, Vic. 3150
Tel. (03) 9814 9999