**Brief*:*** *Laura Gerber MP is calling on the State Labor Government to include the meningococcal B vaccine in the Queensland School Immunisation Program*.

**Key Facts**

* Meningococcal is a life-threatening bacterial infection spread through close contact, including kissing, sneezing or sharing drinks or food.
* There are 5 common strains of Meningococcal in Australia: A, B, C, W and Y. Over the last three years the **B strain has been the most common**. In 2022, 74 per cent of the meningococcal cases were caused by the B strain.
* **1 in 10 who contract the disease will die.** **1 in 4 will be left with a permanent disability** such as loss of limbs, loss of hearing, brain damage, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, severe skin scarring, psychological trauma.
* **On average 20 people die every year because of the disease**, with 32 per cent being under the age of five years old.
* The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends the vaccine for Meningococcal B all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.
* **In Queensland, immunisation against the B strain is NOT included in the state-based immunisation program for all children.** A vaccine covering all the other strains is currently given to babies at 12 months and teenagers in year 10 at school free of charge. But the Meningococcal B strain is not included.
* Consequently, parents and young people have to self-fund the vaccine to be protected. To privately pay for it (including GP costs and the second dose) costs between $400 to $500 per person – in a cost-of-living crisis the expense and time-consuming process is a deterrent to families and young people, and particularly unaffordable for large households. There is the added issue of parents and young people not realising they not protected from the B strain.
* Other states have moved to include the B strain in their school-based immunisation program. Since 2018, the South Australian Government’s Immunisation Plan has ensured that the vaccine for Meningococcal B is available to all babies and teenagers**. The vaccine’s effectiveness was found to be 92% in infants and 100% in adolescents.**
* The cost to implement the vaccine is estimated to be $10 to $15 million. By comparison a case of meningococcal with complications **costs the health care system an estimated $10 million per patient.**

Recommendation/Action

That the Queensland Government include the Meningococcal B vaccination in the School Immunisation Program to protect babies, children, teenagers, and young adults from this insidious virus.

**Sources:**

* Meningitis Centre Australia - <https://meningitis.com.au/>
* ATAGI – [Meningococcal vaccine | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/immunisation-services/meningococcal-immunisation-service-0)
* Australian Institute of Health and Welfare