Australia ramps up measles warnings as cases jump

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Australia on Monday launched a major education campaign to encourage its residents, particularly those travelling overseas, to get vaccinated against measles as a sudden spike in cases amid a global resurgence causes alarm.

Measles—an airborne infection causing fever, coughing and rashes that can be deadly in rare cases—was declared officially eliminated from Australia by the World Health Organisation in 2014.

In developed nations including Australia however, the growing anti-vaccine movement has seen a reemergence of the disease.

The announcement by Health Minister Greg Hunt came as a spate of cases hit Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, with the latest infection alert on Sunday involving two people who holidayed in the Philippines.

Hunt said there were 83 measles cases so far this year, compared to 103 for all of last year and 81 for 2017.

"I am concerned about the recent increases in measles cases in Australia and want to make sure our community is well protected against this very serious disease," Hunt said in a statement.

He warned that due to changing vaccine schedules for Australians born between 1966 and 1994, some people may have received only one dose of vaccine, instead of two, making them more susceptible to infection.

Promotional materials including videos were being developed by the Australian Academy of Science to raise awareness about the need to be fully vaccinated, he added.

Some 93.5 percent of two-year-olds in Australia have received two doses of measles vaccine.

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