

First youth camp by National Allergy Strategy to support teens and young adults with food allergies

- *Teens and young adults with food allergy are at highest risk of fatal anaphylaxis¹*
- *National Allergy Strategy conducts first youth allergy camp*

“Australia leads the world when it comes to the number of people with food allergy, with 10% of infants and 5% of 10-14 year olds affected,” explains Associate Professor Richard Loh, Co-chair of the National Allergy Strategy and past President of the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI). “While food allergies are often seen as a condition of early childhood, research shows that not as many children are outgrowing their food allergy until their teens or young adult years and many children have an allergy to foods such as peanut, tree nuts, sesame, fish and shellfish for life.”

School and youth camps provide a great opportunity for young people to get away with friends and try new things. For young people with food allergy and their parents, camps can be a stressful experience as they rely on the knowledge of others to manage their food allergy and respond in an unlikely emergency.

“Some teens and their families choose not to go on camps as they are worried about how their food allergy will be managed, but young people need to feel confident about being away from home. Like anyone else, they need to engage and enjoy the experiences provided by camps with their friends”, explains Maria Said, Co-chair of the National Allergy Strategy and CEO of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia.

The youth camp is the first camp to be conducted specifically for teens and young adults living with food allergy, with 30 young people from across Australia participating in the camp as part of the National Allergy Strategy’s 250K Youth Project funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.

“In Australia and internationally, camps have been used to assist teens with managing their chronic health condition, but this is the first camp to be held in Australia specifically for young people living with food allergy”, explains A/Prof Richard Loh.

“The aim of the camp is to bring teens and young adults with food allergy together to share their experiences and reduce social isolation and allow them to develop autonomy in managing their condition”, stated Maria.

“Health related camps provide an opportunity to have fun whilst still learning about managing their health condition. Camp participants can develop a sense of community, free of judgement without feeling like they are being singled out. The camp can also help them to learn how others deal with managing their health condition and provide positive experiences about navigating unfamiliar social situations”, commented Maria. “These camps also provide an opportunity for us to learn from young people so that we can engage more effectively with young people who live with potentially life threatening allergies,” added Maria.

Pete Griffiths, CEO of the Australian Camps Association said, “The Australian Camps Association works closely with the National Allergy Strategy to help ensure that people with food and insect allergies can enjoy the many wonderful benefits of the camp experience. All residential camps need to be fully aware of what's required to safely host all people impacted by food and insect allergies and the ACA is delighted to be working with A & AA to co-deliver specific training and workshops in this area for the camps sector. We fully support this camp for young people and congratulate National Allergy Strategy on this initiative.”

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Available for interview:

- **Ms Maria Said: National Allergy Strategy Co-chair, CEO, Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**
- **A/Prof Richard Loh, National Allergy Strategy Co-chair, Paediatric allergy specialist**
- **Parent of child participating in camp**
- **Camp participant**

Background

Led by the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA), as the leading medical and patient organisations for allergy in Australia, the **National Allergy Strategy** aims to address public health issues relating to the rapid and continuing rise of allergy in Australia and improve the health and quality of life of people with allergic diseases, their families and carers, and the community

Further information is available at: www.nationalallergystrategy.org.au

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)

The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) was established in 1990 as a not for profit, peak professional medical organisation for allergy and clinical immunology in Australia and New Zealand. ASCIA members include clinical immunology/allergy specialists, other medical practitioners, scientists and allied health professionals who work in the areas of allergy and immunology.

The mission of ASCIA is to advance the science and practice of allergy and clinical immunology, by promoting the highest standard of medical practice, education and research, to improve the health and quality of life of people with allergic diseases, immunodeficiencies and other immune diseases.

For further information go to: www.allergy.org.au

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA)

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA) was established in 1993 as a charitable, not for profit organisation, to improve awareness of allergy and anaphylaxis in the Australian community, by sharing current information, education, advocacy, research, guidance and support.

A&AA is primarily a volunteer based organisation that is supported by Department of Health and Ageing funding, sale of resources, sponsorship and donations. Their outreach extends to individuals, families, school, workplaces, health professionals, government, food industry and all Australians.

A&AA is part of an international alliance of similar organisations and works closely with peak medical bodies, including ASCIA. Their medical advisory board comprises ASCIA members who are specialist immunology and allergy physicians from across Australia.

For further information go to: www.allergyfacts.org.au

References

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