



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Boy's death a lesson for the Australian community**

On Friday June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, the Coronial findings into the death of a 13 year old Victorian boy will be released to the public at the Melbourne Coroners Court.

Five years after the death of Scotch College student Nathan Francis whilst on a school cadet camp, Coroner Audrey Jamieson will detail the circumstances surrounding his death and deliver her recommendations.

Prior to the camp Nathan's parents had made the staff and army personnel aware of his severe peanut allergy however unfortunately he was given a ration pack containing satay beef.

Within half an hour of eating a mouthful, Nathan suffered a severe allergic reaction and became unconscious. Despite being treated with several doses of adrenaline by the camp doctor he was pronounced dead that afternoon.

Anaphylaxis Australia president Maria Said was called on as an expert witness to assist the Coroner at the inquest of Nathan Francis in 2010.

Said explained, "When it comes to food allergy it's not a single omission by a single person. People don't intend for someone with food allergy to have a potentially life threatening reaction, it's usually systems that let people down. Manageable strategies to reduce risk are ticked off on paper, but often not implemented unless there is a parent in the background driving the process."

At the Directions hearing in May 2010 Coroner Jamieson stated, "There are huge public health and safety issues in relation to the management of children with allergies by our schools..."

Ms Said stated, "Systems need to be put in place to avoid accidental exposure to foods and all staff need to be trained to recognise an emergency, know what to do and act promptly. Despite legislation being available in Victoria, more needs to be done both in Victoria and throughout Australia."

In 2008 the Children's Services and Education Legislation Amendment Act in Victoria came into effect, stipulating that any school with students at risk of anaphylaxis must by law have an Anaphylaxis Management Plan, prevention strategies, communication strategies and regular training for school staff in recognising and responding appropriately to an anaphylactic reaction.

Law that had been recommended by a NSW Coroner in 2005 after the death of a NSW 13 year old Hamidur Rahman, has not been enacted. Despite some progress, the approach to anaphylaxis education around the country remains adhoc, especially in high schools.

A 16 year old boy died from anaphylaxis at a Sydney high school in May 2011 and to date there has been no mention of a Coronial inquiry into his death. Fatal allergic reactions crush families and leave friends, teachers, carers and the wider community devastated. We need to be doing more to help prevent severe allergic reactions and indeed fatal allergic reactions.

Maria Said, president of Anaphylaxis Australia concluded saying “Our hope is that alongside legislation being implemented across Australia, there will be more of a national approach to education and information on the implementation of strategies to reduce risk in a society where food allergy is increasing in prevalence. This increase in young children at risk of anaphylaxis means there will be a greater number of children reaching high risk teenage years and we need to be instigating change now so we are ready”

Teenagers are a high risk group when it comes to anaphylaxis. According to US, UK and Australian research, most food allergy related fatalities occur in teens and young people with nut allergy who also have asthma and are eating away from home. Teens need to be educated on how to manage their food allergy from childhood so they can reach their teen years armed with information and strategies to manage a potentially life threatening allergy.

A series of You Tube clips featuring Neighbours stars Kaiya Jones and Morgan Baker have been produced to educate teenagers about food allergy. These clips are being launched in memory of Nathan Francis and can be viewed at <http://www.foodallergyaware.com.au>

With the sharing of information, education, effective support and guidance of all in the community, people with food allergy can lead a close to normal life. Risk is forever present for those with food allergy but risk can be greatly reduced. A whole community approach is what will help teens and all who care for and about them manage food allergy.

**ENDS**

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Anaphylaxis Australia Inc is a non-profit Australian charity which was formed in 1993. AAI's mission is to increase awareness of anaphylaxis through education, research and support. The organisation works with health and teaching professionals, members of the food industry and all who are touched by life-threatening allergy so that, together, we can improve the quality of life of Australians with allergies, nationally.

For more information visit the AAI website: [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au) or call 1300 728 000

For further information or to arrange an interview with Anaphylaxis Australia President, Maria Said or Nathan Francis' parents please contact:

Amber King  
MWC Media  
Tel: 03 9912 6839  
[amber@mwcmmedia.com.au](mailto:amber@mwcmmedia.com.au)