

Jab lifts swine flu risk

By CLAIR WEAVER

AUSTRALIANS are being put at unnecessary risk by mass vaccination for swine flu, which is more likely to cause harm than provide protection.

This is the stark warning to the Government from one of the nation's most respected experts on infectious diseases.

In a scathing assessment of Australia's handling of the pandemic, Professor Peter Collignon says an inappropriate vaccine program has put the public's health at "needless risk".

His alert come as a series of Canadian studies unexpectedly reveal the seasonal flu jab can double the risk of people developing swine flu.

Professor Collignon, director of Canberra Hospital's infectious diseases unit, told *The Sunday Telegraph* the benefits of the jab "don't outweigh the adverse affects".

"We have to be very wary of risk," he said.

"We need to have more work done before we roll the vaccine out to the entire population."

Professor Collignon's

views are published in the latest editions of the *Medical Journal of Australia* and *Australian Prescriber*.

He is concerned by the Canadian research findings and warns that Australia does not have adequate post-vaccine surveillance to establish the risk here.

"The available evidence from these studies suggests that if you have the seasonal flu vaccine, you have twice the chance of ending up in hospital with swine flu," he said.

Professor Collignon claimed in *Australian Prescriber* that the swine-flu jab was only about 50 per cent protective — and about half the population was already immune to H1N1, as related strains had circulated in the past.

Fuelled by "widespread fear", the Federal Government had made "inappropriate" decisions, including mass vaccination of low-risk people, his report concluded.

The chances of an otherwise healthy person dying of swine flu were less than one in a million, making it less deadly than normal flu, he said.