Vaccine curbed swine flu

WITHOUT Australia’s roll-out of an effective swine flu vaccination, newspapers “would be full of concern about a second wave”, an infectious diseases expert says.

Professor Robert Booy said the rapid deployment of a vaccine for the H1N1 pandemic virus last year plus rising immunity among those Australians who had caught and recovered from the virus had reduced new swine flu infections this winter to a “ripple”.

“A large proportion of the population is now protected, so large that mathematical modelling shows that a huge stop has been put on the virus’ spread,” said Professor Booy, from the Children’s Hospital at Westmead and University of Sydney.

“This winter we are seeing a ripple of influenza rather than a wave.

“Even so, most influenza cases remain pandemic H1N1 and deaths and intensive care admissions are occurring, albeit at a low level.”