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## **Sports injuries: keeping kids safe**

Sports Medicine Australia believes that the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, and Medibank Private are to be congratulated for flagging a greater Federal Government and health industry concern with sports injuries.

In launching the results of new research by Medibank Private into sports injuries among school children, the Minister emphasised the importance of Federal Government programs targeted at reducing the alarming growth in inactivity and poor diet-induced obesity among children.

"The Minister and Medibank Private know that injury - and fear of becoming injured or getting hurt - is consistently one of the greatest barriers to participation in sport and physical activity," SMA spokesperson Dr John Orchard said today.

Dr Orchard, a leading sports physician and sports injury researcher for both the NRL and AFL, is also team doctor for the Sydney Roosters and NSW State of Origin teams.

"The Minister is also to be congratulated for measures such as making the services of exercise physiologists rebateable under Medicare, although more could be done in this area to specifically target sports injury," Dr Orchard said.

New Zealand had a national sports injury insurance scheme which covered medical, surgical and physiotherapy treatment of sports injuries - and which also collected nationally reliable data on sports injuries in children, he said.

"Reliable national data collection is essential if we are to have good policy.

"Sports Medicine Australia has also developed extensive injury prevention programs such as "Smartplay", which emphasise correct warm up, hydration and use of safety equipment.

"Smartplay is only available in some states (although Medibank Private has recently supported a pilot in NSW schools).

"Federal Government support for a national rollout of Smartplay would be a major step forward in sports injury prevention," Dr Orchard said.

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**media release**