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12 September 2013

Mr Trevor Ruthenberg
Member for Kallangur
Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000



Dear Mr Ruthenberg

I write in response to an invitation from you as the Chair of the Health and Community Services Committee to clarify my comments made at the Public Hearing of the Committee's Inquiry into the *Public Health (Exclusion of unvaccinated children from child care) Amendment Bill 2013* held on Monday, 19 August 2013, which are reported at page 9 of the transcript of that hearing.

Mr Shuttleworth, Member for Ferny Grove, asked a question of members of the public who supported the views of the Australian Vaccination Network. This question followed a rather forceful exchange of views between Dr Douglas, Member for Gaven, and representatives of this anti-vaccination lobby group.

The substance of Mr Shuttleworth's question was the degree of choice available to parents with regard to child vaccination and the potential for an amendment to the Bill.

The subsequent exchange between myself and Mrs Haines and Ms Hansen-Smith was in the context of the current Bill and the potential for an amendment to address the concerns of those with a conscientious objection to child vaccination, as was made in the *NSW Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill 2013*.

The *Public Health (Exclusion of unvaccinated children from child care) Amendment Bill* made provision for exemption on medical grounds. This exemption was intentionally interpreted broadly to encourage parents to discuss their concerns with their General Practitioner in private. The assumption being that these discussions would encompass religious and other ethical concerns about vaccination.

The Queensland Bill does not prescribe the level of detail for the claiming of a medical exemption that is contained in the final New South Wales Bill. That Bill requires people claiming exemption on these grounds to complete formal documentation, with Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) forms required to be completed and lodged with Medicare. These forms are [Immunisation Exemption Conscientious Objection Form \(IMMU12\)](#) and [Immunisation Exemption - Medical Contraindication Form \(IMMU11\)](#)

What the Queensland Bill provided for was an exemption on medical grounds, and if a parent had a legitimate concern about the medical consequences of vaccination, I felt this ground would cover this objection if supported by appropriate medical documentation. This is reflected in my statement to the Committee.

The final NSW Bill did not include an explicit exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection as the intent of the Bill was to minimise the influence of the often false and misleading information disseminated by the Australian Vaccination Network.

Encouraging parents with concerns about immunisation to raise these with their General Practitioner was viewed as a more flexible, effective and non-confrontational strategy to allay parental concerns, without legitimising Australian Vaccination Network falsehoods as a valid reason for "conscientious objection".

It was always my intention to engage with Members of the Committee to seek their views on possible amendments to the Bill in response to submissions to ensure a bipartisan approach to these important public health issues. I am disappointed that Members have not taken this opportunity.

If the Committee is loath to suggest amendments to this Bill that would satisfy their concerns and reflect the considerations that they feel are important, given the current outbreak of measles among young adults, with potentially fatal consequences, I hope that the government will take the issue of falling child vaccination rates in specific Queensland communities seriously and consider introducing its own legislation to empower child care centres to exclude unvaccinated children, without a legitimate exemption, if they so choose.

Choosing to protect children seems a much more sensible approach than choosing to increase the risk of serious epidemics of vaccine preventable infectious diseases.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Jo-Ann Miller
MP for Bundamba
Shadow Minister for Health