

From: [Merilyn Haines](#)
To: [Health and Community Services Committee](#)
Subject: Submission - Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013
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Importance: High

The Research Director
Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

15th July 2013

Submission - Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013

Dear Committee

I would like to first say that I am not opposed to vaccinations, my family members and I have been vaccinated with most vaccines, but not all vaccines, this has been a matter of informed choice.

There is good reason to have concerns with some vaccinations and the lack of monitoring and adverse health effects. It is only a couple of years ago now that hundreds of West Australian children suffered severe febrile fits after the roll out of the CSF seasonal flu vaccine. There was a lack of testing in WA before the govt rolled the child vaccination campaign.

A Brisbane 2 year old also girl died the night after having a seasonal flu vaccination (which included swine flu) just before the onset of the West Australian vaccine drama. Another Perth girl has suffered severe brain damage after a flu vaccination about 2 years ago, this has been reported in the Qld media recently

I believe that the proposed Qld Legislation (like the NSW Legislation) is draconian . It will bully and harass parents into forcibly vaccinating their children so that they can obtain child care for their children.

Vaccination, a medical treatment, should always be matter of parental and personal choice.

The Australian Medical Association's Code of Ethics recognizes that Doctors should respect their patients right to choose or reject treatment. Parents should not be bullied into accepting a medical treatment for their children.

Many parents have to put their children into childcare to be able to earn enough income to pay their rent or mortgage.

If MPs pass the proposed legislation it will force many Qld parents into having their children vaccinated, if the parents wish to get childcare for their children so that parents can keep their jobs and their homes . They will have little other choice.

As a parent, I am aware that children get a succession of childhood illnesses , they can be sick for months on end with one cough and cold after another . Children who are unwell should not be vaccinated, parents and doctors should wait until they are fully recovered , however with the pressure that this legislation will bring, many parents may feel pressured into vaccinating early so as to not fall foul of the obligation to have to children fully vaccinated to the government time table to be able to obtain childcare.

Vaccinating children who may not be in full health is a particular concern with the multiple vaccinations that are given at one time.

It is believed that there is only 1 to 2 % of parents who are conscientious objectors and they have made this choice through their own extensive research and deliberations.

I believe that this legislation is dictatorial. By all means encourage and remind parents who intend to vaccinate their children but who have either forgotten or have fallen behind the govt dictated timeline because of child illness or other reasons, but please do not use the big stick of refusing childcare to those who do not vaccinate , or who wish to vaccinate to a delayed timetable, or wish to vaccinate their children with most vaccines, but who may wish to delay or avoid vaccines that may contain Thiomersal mercury preservative.

This push to refuse childcare is a result of major lobbying by the Murdoch media. What the media and promoters of this move to refuse childcare to unvaccinated children fail to provide is an explanation of how vaccinated children in childcare can be at risk from un- vaccinated children which seems to be at the heart of this legislation.

I earlier referred to my family members being vaccinated . Some of family members have had most of the time appropriate vaccinations, however some have chosen to not have the swine flu/ seasonal flu vaccinations which they rightly consider should always be optional.

With the TGA just being able to add any vaccination to their schedule of what they consider is a fully vaccinated child (the TGA added two more vaccinations just a couple of weeks ago) what is to stop the TGA in the future adding optional vaccinations such as flu vaccinations to their schedule for children ? Can the Committee guarantee that flu vaccinations or even extremely perhaps Gardasil vaccinations will not in the future be considered mandatory for children to be able to be allowed into a childcare facility?

I hope the carrot policy of encouragement is used, rather than the big stick policy of beating parents into submission to achieve the govt desired goal of nearly 100 % fully - vaccinated rate.

I hope that the Committee will consider the issues I have raised.

Yours faithfully

Merilyn Haines

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From: [Merilyn Haines](#)
To: [Health and Community Services Committee](#)
Subject: Further submission - Submission - Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013
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Please consider the information contained in this article below from the “*The Conversation*” written by 2 Australian health professionals as a further submission to the Committee.

I hope that the Committee will duly consider the issues and information raised in this article, particularly that nationally 92 % of children are fully vaccinated by the age of 2 years old, and **importantly, childhood vaccination rates have been stable and even increased slightly in the four year-old age group.** Additionally only a tiny 1.5 % are registered conscientious objectors .

It thus appears no reason to panic or use legislation to force parents into vaccinating their children with such already existing high vaccination rates. I believe that the Australian vaccination rate is considerably higher than equivalent western societies.

Yours faithfully

Merilyn Haines

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With vaccination rates stable, ‘no jab, no play’ rules are beside the point

A recent News Limited campaign to enable childcare centres in NSW to refuse entry to unvaccinated children is gaining momentum, with the legislation expected to be introduced to NSW parliament this week. The proposal stems from a public outcry about vaccination rates arising from profound levels of...

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The ‘no jab, no play’ rule seeks to reduce the risk of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak but it may actually increase the risk.

A recent News Limited [campaign](#) to enable childcare centres in NSW to refuse entry to unvaccinated children is gaining momentum, with the legislation [expected to be introduced](#) to NSW parliament this week.

The proposal stems from a public outcry about vaccination rates arising from profound levels of support that most Australians have for vaccination. This support is warranted – vaccines have saved millions of lives

But the “no jab, no play” campaign is flawed: not only would such a measure be unfair on these children, the campaign is partly based on a [false assumption](#) that vaccination rates are declining – and that could have unintended consequences.

Let’s get the facts

Nationally, [92% of children](#) are fully vaccinated by the age of two. Importantly, childhood vaccination rates have [been stable and even increased slightly](#) in the four year-old age group.

In 2012, 1.49% of parents registered their vaccine refusal – a requirement if they wish to be eligible for government payments. This figure [has climbed](#) from 0.23% in 1999 but the gradual increase is likely due to a greater awareness of these government payment provisions for non-vaccinating parents rather than a true increase.

In regions where non-vaccinating parents cluster, there has been no significant change, just a persistent problem that needs addressing.

But recent headlines have painted a picture of vaccination rates in free fall, caused by hordes of selfish parents in wealthy suburbs wilfully free-riding off the immunity of others. Some media ran with the easy formula: pitting vaccination opponents against proponents and parading case examples of non-vaccinating parents. One [editorial](#) went so far as to call for separate schools for unvaccinated children.

Unintended consequences

Some of the current media coverage risks polarising communities. It does little for under-vaccination and may unwittingly worsen it. Parents who may have [never seen nor considered](#) anti-vaccination arguments are introduced to them. [Some may see](#) refusing vaccines as a new trend worth considering, emulating others perceived to be more knowledgeable. Those who may be tentative or leaning away from vaccination could be further alienated.

This polarisation could lead to ideologically dogmatic debate and then isolation for parents who are merely cautious. In such a harsh environment, these parents might be readily labelled as “anti-vaccination” and their concerns attacked.

Make no mistake, under-vaccination remains a significant problem in some regions and population groups and it needs to be addressed.

But we need to understand the causes and evidence on how to address this problem. Some parents have difficulties in accessing services or lack the practical support required to get their kids immunised fully and on time. Others actively [reject immunisation](#) often because they believe the harms outweigh the benefits.



Childhood vaccination rates are stable and have even increased slightly. Image from shutterstock.com

Improving vaccination rates

Mandatory vaccination at any level may seem compelling but is not necessary: it's poorly targeted and ignores the low-hanging fruit already in place.

Australia could do more to enforce current provisions in states and territories for universal vaccination record checks at the time of enrolment in school or childcare. This ensures those who are incompletely vaccinated or unvaccinated can be excluded during outbreaks. Importantly, it also prompts late parents to catch up their children – an area where significant gains in vaccination rates could be made.

But many schools and childcare centres are not insisting on the documentation and the requirements vary considerably between states and territories. Accordingly, federal health minister Tanya Plibersek [recently announced](#) a move to strengthen these requirements when children enrol in school.

This strategy recognises that the biggest impediment to full and timely vaccination is busy parents with competing demands. Strategies that [prompt them](#) when a vaccine is due are demonstrably effective in raising vaccination rates. That's why NSW Health [recently introduced](#) the "Save the Date to Vaccinate" campaign that includes a smart phone application for parents.

Changing the minds of vaccine refusers

For the small group of parents actively declining vaccines – [now officially known as "vaccine refusers"](#) – the solutions are more challenging. [While nationally they may be up to 2% of parents](#), they [tend to cluster](#) in regions like the Northern Rivers of NSW and Sunshine Coast of QLD. This is of concern because diseases prevented by vaccines are more likely to occur in such regions. Parents in these communities are committed to their views and hard to change.

The solutions in these communities should be built around listening, engaging and building trust. Supporting local health professionals and encouraging peer advocacy are two approaches being explored in [Washington State in the United States](#) and are now being considered in Australia.

There have been calls for parents who refuse vaccines to not be denied childcare support payments and family tax benefits.

But to register as a vaccine refuser (and receive these payments), parents must discuss the risks of their decision with a health professional. Health professionals report that occasionally this discussion ends in the parent changing their mind and consenting to receipt of at least some recommended vaccines. Removing the incentive for such an encounter removes an opportunity for health professionals to encourage parents to reconsider their decision.

Why 'no jab, no play' won't work

The proposed legislation seeks to reduce the risk of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak. But it may actually increase the risk by corralling unvaccinated children together where an outbreak of a disease such as measles could spread much more rapidly. This is effectively punishing children for their parents' decision.

Systematically enforced universal record checks of children's vaccination status serves to remind late parents nearly as well as bans would, while allowing the children to participate in society without further disadvantage.

As for the parents who actively decline vaccines, they do so out of a desire to do the right thing by their children. These parents may be genuinely misguided about vaccination, but they are not wilfully selfish. For them – and the [vaccine-hesitant parents](#) – listening, respectful communication, and quality information are more likely to win them over than castigation and coercion.

Disclosure Statement

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