

The Hon Roger Cook MLA Deputy Premier Minister for Health; Mental Health

Our Ref: 60-14568

Dear Ms Wilyman

Thank you for your email of 25 January 2019 regarding your concerns about the new Public Health Regulations 2017, and proposed No Jab No Play (NJNP) legislation. I am also responding to you on behalf of Hon Sue Ellery MLA.

In your letter you suggest the proposed NJNP legislation enforces vaccinations; however, please be assured that should the legislation be passed in Parliament, it will not require persons to be vaccinated. Vaccination remains a choice of the individual or parent, and it is not compulsory. Under proposed new legislation, under-vaccinated children without a valid exemption may be refused enrolment in child care and kindergarten, which are non-compulsory years of early education and care. This measure will help reduce the risk of children who cannot be vaccinated, for example, because of a medical contraindication or being too young, being exposed to serious vaccine preventable illness while attending child care or kindergarten.

Regulation 10E of the Public Health Regulations 2017 gives authority to the Chief Health Officer (CHO) or their delegate, to direct the person in charge of a school not to permit a child to attend the school if the child has not been immunised against, or acquired immunity from, a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease (VPD). While this direction could be given during an outbreak of a VPD at a school, this direction may also need to be exercised in the event a child has been exposed to a VPD in places outside of the school grounds, and who could, by continuing to attend school, put other children at risk of exposure. In any case, this precaution has been used very infrequently over the years, if at all, and it would never be the intention of the CHO to deny a child access to education where it was not an essential public health measure.

With regards to your concerns around the efficacy of the vaccines which appear on the childhood immunisation schedule, an extensive body of scientific research demonstrates that routine Australian childhood immunisation programs are safe and highly effective in preventing serious illnesses and death. Comprehensive information on vaccine safety and the childhood immunisation schedule can be found at:

- The Australian Immunisation Handbook
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/content/handbook10home>.
- The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance <http://www.ncirs.edu.au/>.

All vaccines used in Australia undergo a rigorous, scientific evaluation process prior to coming to market, to ensure they are safe and effective.

You will be interested to know that the NJNP policy acknowledges the importance of access to early education under the 2018-2019 National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. It is particularly important that vulnerable and disadvantaged children are supported to attend early education and care services. Under this policy, it is proposed that these children will be exempt from the requirement to be fully vaccinated for age, as a condition of enrolment in child care services and kindergartens.

Exemptions will also be made for children who have a medical contraindication to vaccination, which has been approved by an eligible health professional and recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register.

The Western Australian Government has consulted extensively with medical experts regarding this policy, and is committed to protecting Western Australian children and the wider community from vaccine-preventable illnesses.

Thank you for raising your concerns.

HON ROGER COOK

MLA DEPUTY PREMIER MINISTER FOR HEALTH; MENTAL HEALTH r 8 MAR 2019

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