



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 28 May 2013

NSW GOVERNMENT BOOSTS CHILDHOOD VACCINATION LAWS

Unvaccinated children will face exclusion from child care facilities under new laws to be introduced by the NSW Government.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner will introduce legislation to deny children enrolment in child care facilities if parents or guardians cannot show proof of vaccination or provide an approved exemption.

“Anyone who has seen a baby with whooping cough or a toddler with measles, as I have, or spoken to a parent who has lost a child knows the devastating consequences of failure to vaccinate,” Mrs Skinner said today.

“Forget the scaremongering - there is nothing to fear from vaccination. The NSW Government is determined to protect our children.

“These changes send a very clear message to parents that their children will need to be vaccinated to attend a child care facility or they’ll need to get an approved exemption.

“This significantly tightens the rules around child immunisation – it means those parents who have been reluctant to vaccinate will need to consult a GP about their decision and be aware of the health risks.”

The bill would amend the *Public Health Act 2010* to:

- a) Require parents or guardians to provide evidence their child is fully vaccinated for age, or is on a recognised catch-up schedule, or has an exemption approved by a GP. Those seeking exemptions will be required to fill in forms used by the Commonwealth, which must be completed by a GP (or other approved provider) after counselling. Valid exemptions may include a medical contraindication to vaccination or religious grounds.
- b) Require directors of childcare facilities to obtain vaccination evidence or exemption prior to enrolment. NSW Health will work with Department of Education and Communities to ensure child care facilities are aware of the new requirements. Failure to comply will be an offence subject to a fine.

“Currently, the state-wide vaccination coverage is 92 per cent but some communities are lagging behind – notably, parts of the state’s north coast and far west, as well as eastern and northern Sydney,” Mrs Skinner said.

“This may be because doctors are underreporting to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR), or busy parents or guardians are failing to commence or complete their child’s vaccination regime, or parents or guardians object to vaccination and refuse to allow their child to be vaccinated. Whatever the reason, the NSW Government will act to protect our children.”

Mrs Skinner said the NSW Government has a multi-faceted approach to lifting the vaccination rate. As well as the proposed amendment to the Public Health Act 2010, it includes:

- the ‘Save the Date to Vaccinate’ campaign, which includes television, radio, outdoor advertising, a new internet site and a mobile phone ‘app’ that includes an immunisation reminder tool. (The app is available at <http://www.immunisation.health.nsw.gov.au/>)
- the creation of a Childcare Enrolment Toolkit to assist child care facilities obtain vaccination information and help parents access local vaccination services.
- the appointment of Aboriginal Immunisation Liaison Officers in each of the state’s local health districts.

The NSW Government expects to table the bill in parliament tomorrow. The new legislation would take effect from January 1, 2014.

For more information, go to:

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/vaccination_enrolment.aspx