



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT ENACTS CHILDHOOD VACCINATION REFORM

Amendments to laws regarding the enrolment of children in child care centres passed through NSW Parliament today, with the aim of increasing rates of childhood vaccination across the state.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner said the new laws, which come into effect on 1 January 2014, were introduced by the NSW Government to improve protection from preventable diseases for all children enrolled in the state's child care centres.

"As a community, we can never be complacent about our health and particularly the health of those who are most vulnerable," Mrs Skinner said.

"The legislation denies children enrolment in child care facilities if parents or guardians cannot show proof of vaccination or provide an approved exemption.

"These amendments to the Public Health Act send a clear message to parents that the NSW Government is serious about protecting the health of children.

"We have been resolute about tightening the rules around child immunisation and these changes mean parents who are reluctant to vaccinate will need to meet with a GP to discuss their decision and be educated on the associated health risks."

Mrs Skinner said in forming the policy, the NSW Government listened to the concerns of child care centre operators.

"These operators feared it would be their responsibility to decide whether to accept or deny children who aren't immunised and the conflict it would create in their centres and communities.

"These reforms also speak to those parents who simply forgot to immunise their child and ensures those who don't immunise their child do so in the knowledge of the health risks.

"I know the community joins me in welcoming these common sense changes to boost immunisation rates.

"I have no doubt these changes will go some way to protecting children across the state from the devastating effects of vaccine preventable disease." Mrs Skinner said.

The bill has amended 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.

As well as the amendment to the Public Health Act 2010, the NSW Health encourages the increase of vaccination in the community through:

- the 'Save the Date to Vaccinate' campaign, which includes television and radio, 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.

For more information, go to:

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