



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW CHILD CARE VACCINATION LEGISLATION TAKES EFFECT TODAY

New legislation comes into effect today to help protect children in child care centres from preventable disease.

From today a child cannot be enrolled at a child care facility unless the parent or guardian provides an official immunisation record proving the child is fully immunised or an approved exemption is provided.

If a child has a medical contraindication to vaccination, or is on a recognised catch-up schedule for immunisation, or if the parents or guardians are reluctant to vaccinate on religious or other grounds, the parents or guardian will have to produce Commonwealth forms that have been completed by a GP or nurse immuniser.

Mrs Skinner said the amendments to the *Public Health Act 2010* send a clear message to parents that the NSW Government is serious about protecting the health of children and the wider community.

“The NSW Government is determined to protect our children from the devastating consequences of vaccine-preventable disease,” Mrs Skinner said.

“No longer will it be left to child care operators to decide whether to enrol or refuse an unimmunised child. This new legislation makes it very clear what must happen and, while we expect a very high level of compliance from child care operators, there will be provision for fines should operators not comply.

“This legislation puts the onus squarely on parents and guardians to either show proof of vaccination or provide an approved exemption, which can only be granted after counselling by a GP or nurse immuniser.

“This will capture the parents who simply forget to stay up to date with their child’s immunisation schedule. We expect it will also educate those who are anti-vaccination.

“Forget the scaremongering - there is nothing to fear from vaccination.”

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said the vast majority of children in NSW are fully immunised for their age.

“Vaccines used in Australia have gone through extensive testing to determine their safety and effectiveness,” Dr Chant said.

“Children in NSW have the advantage of a comprehensive immunisation program that protects them from potentially-fatal diseases such as measles, tetanus and diphtheria, and debilitating conditions such as polio and hepatitis B.

“Today is a timely reminder to parents to make sure their children are fully immunised before heading back to child care in the New Year,” Dr Chant said.

Mrs Skinner said the NSW Government has made the new requirements as straightforward as possible by using existing Commonwealth forms and creating resources for distribution to parents, child care facilities and immunisation providers to explain the changes.

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

- the creation of a Child Care Enrolment Toolkit to assist child care facilities obtain vaccination information and help parents access local vaccination services. The toolkit is available at <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Documents/Immunisation-Enrolment-Toolkit.pdf>
- the ‘Save the Date to Vaccinate’ campaign, which includes television and radio advertising, a new internet site and a mobile phone ‘app’ which includes an immunisation reminder tool. The app is available at <http://www.immunisation.health.nsw.gov.au/>
- 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