



22 September 2015

Ms Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Chair
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Email: sarc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Blandthorn

‘Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Bill 2015’

I would like to go on record that I disagree with the ‘No Jab, No Play’ policies being rolled out in Victoria and other states and fully support freedom of choice for all medical procedures and I urge you to consider the issues raised in this letter. Unfortunately, if this legislation is adopted it will do away with conscientious objectors and prevent access to much needed childcare/kindergarten programs as well as place future restrictions on schooling. This policy makes it impossible for many parents to choose to not vaccinate, even where they have legitimate concerns. Where the choice is so restricted that it affects a parent’s income, supporting payments and access to education or childcare, many parents will be forced to go against their will and instincts and accept a medical procedure that could put their child at risk. They will not be able to survive financially without making that decision to vaccinate.

Since the age of 18 I have been an avid Liberal voter. I have assisted with campaigns and supported my local member whenever possible. Now at the age of 35 I do not feel I can vote for Liberal (or Labour) for the first time ever as a result of the push for ‘No Jab, No Play’ policies arising in Victoria, Queensland and on a federal level as well which will affect all states.

When I became a parent I spoke to my doctor about my medical history, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I was left bedridden and in extreme pain for years after the MMR vaccination - unable to function in any capacity in my teens. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Obviously this put immense pressure on my father who was trying to care for sick children, a sick wife and work to earn an income. It was a very difficult time to say the least.

I have spoken to many doctors about my medical history and about their opinion on vaccinating my children as a result. Our question has always been - what would they do? We have expressed our concern that obviously there has to be some kind of a genetic susceptibility and we asked if there was any testing available and studies that showed what genetic predispositions may be linked that would make one more susceptible to a vaccination reaction. Each doctor was not aware of any such testing or studies although they agreed that it should occur as there isn’t a ‘one size fits all’ solution for anybody. They all said it had to be our choice in the end as we would have to live with the outcome if something was to occur. They answered our question clearly by saying they don’t know what they would do if in the same position. It had to be our call. We have discussed at great lengths the benefits and risks to each vaccine. A conscientious objector form was signed and in the

meantime my husband and I continually re-evaluate what we should do in the future. If conscientious objector forms were not necessary and only medical exemptions available then I doubt I would have even bothered with the conversation and had many in-depth discussions around vaccinations and what future they will have in our children's lives. Whilst conscientious objection is available we will continue to have these discussions. However when this is removed and access to preschool/childcare facilities or even schools is restricted to the vaccinated only, then what is the point in having discussions with doctors? At best we wouldn't be able to inoculate with all of the vaccines available and as such would never be able to comply with the school/childcare requirements to be fully immunised. Our children would need to simply be homeschooled and we would be forced into the anti vaccination category. Therefore, whilst objector forms are required and obtainable, people will consult doctors opinions on vaccinations which allow an opportunity for a change of mind after hearing the doctor's perspective and experiences. Without the need for those forms then people will simply not consult with their doctors over vaccinations and they have less opportunity for discussions and therefore a change of perspective. In my view this only serves the purpose of potentially decreasing their opportunity to improve immunization rates not increase them.

As parents we live with the weight of the decisions we make daily and take it very seriously too. To further protect my children's health I have done extended breastfeeding and not enrolled my children in childcare to lessen the risk of contracting a 'preventable illness' whilst their immune systems grow and build. We have taken a severely reduced income so I can care for our children myself whilst my husband works.

There will be a time however when our children will need to go to preschool and school and whilst they are always healthy and have never even had a single cold, it concerns me that in order to send them to a place where they can be educated and learn how to navigate important social paradigms they will be forced to be vaccinated in order to attend. A decision that neither our doctors, myself nor my husband have been able to make to date due to its unknown risks.

Where there is risk, there must always be choice. There are no studies done into the reasons behind why people react. It is not acceptable to say that people who do not vaccinate are 'anti vax'. I am not anti vaccination. I am pro choice. At the end of the day if something happens and our children react in a way that I reacted, [REDACTED] or have a whole separate severe reaction of their own, we (the parents) are responsible for their ongoing care. We have to live with that decision and cost and emotional and physical commitment to care for them and love them through those difficult times. I do not accept that this decision can be taken lightly and be made by Government bodies or even doctors. This is a decision that only a parent can make as they are the ones who are left to pick up the pieces.

I ask you to please reconsider your stance and ask you to understand that not everybody who is unvaccinated is 'anti vax'. Many of us take a conservative, consultative and conscientious approach and I do not agree that this makes us a danger in any way. We are simply trying to make a decision we can all live with happily and healthily.

As Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull stated on the 7.30 Report on 21 September 2015 - "Well, this is a Liberal National government. It is a free market government. It is committed to ensuring that Australians are free to choose their own directions, whether it's in their business or their profession or their family. So they've got to - so freedom is the - freedom is the key point."

I ask you to consider the impact of taking away these freedoms and ask you respectfully to reconsider.

Regards

[REDACTED]