

THE PROMOTION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION OR PRACTICES

Organisation: Northern Rivers Vaccination Supporters (NRVS)
Name: Ms Alison Gaylard
Position: Spokesperson
Date Received: 13/12/2013

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Mrs Leslie Williams
Chair,
Committee on Health Care Complaints Commission
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

12th December 2013

Re: INQUIRY INTO THE PROMOTION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING HEALTH-RELATED
INFORMATION OR PRACTICES

Dear Mrs Williams,

I wish to make a submission on behalf of Northern Rivers Vaccination Supporters (NRVS) about the false and misleading health information disseminated by the anti-vaccination group Australian Vaccination Network (AVN).

Firstly, some background information about our group. Northern NSW is an area with low vaccination rates and is at risk of epidemics of contagious disease. According to the latest Annual Report by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS)

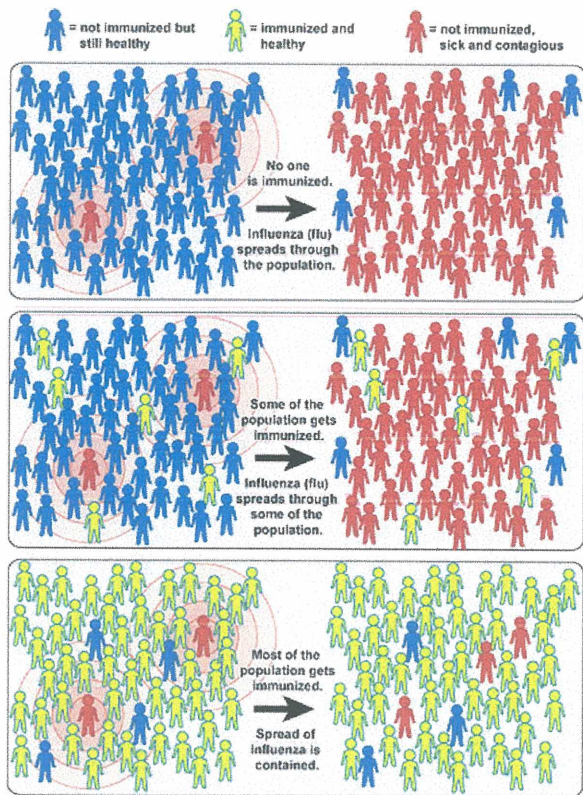
[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdi3701-pdf-](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdi3701-pdf-cnt.htm/$FILE/cdi3701b.pdf)

[cnt.htm/\\$FILE/cdi3701b.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdi3701-pdf-cnt.htm/$FILE/cdi3701b.pdf) (Appendix 1 attached) Our region has the highest proportion of official conscientious objectors in Australia (Figure 15) with Richmond – Tweed at 7.8% and Lismore at 7.2%. Similarly, we have a very high proportion of children with no vaccines recorded Richmond – Tweed 9.9% and Lismore 8.9%. These rates put the rest of our community at risk by putting us below the threshold required to achieve herd immunity (or community immunity). Herd immunity is the level of vaccination required to protect the community that are not vaccinated from an outbreak. The level of vaccination required depends on the efficacy of the vaccine. The pertussis vaccine has only about 85% efficacy therefore requires a much higher level of vaccination.

Dr Brian Zikmund-Fisher very eloquently explained herd immunity in the documentary “Jabbed”.

There are two things that matter for whether or not I get sick. One is if I bump into somebody who has the disease, am I protected against it or not (vaccinated)... but the more important piece is the chance that I will bump into somebody in the first place (level of vaccination in the community).

This diagram also helps to explain the theory:



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herd_immunity (Appendix 2)

We are a group of local people who have gotten together with a shared interest in increasing the immunisation rates in our community. Our motivation is simple - we want to try and reduce the risk of epidemics of contagious disease, prevent the pain and suffering that vaccine preventable disease can cause, and protect the vulnerable that can't be vaccinated because of age or illness.

We want to send a positive message out there to people who are confused or hesitant about vaccinations, to provide honest and clear information, and to support one another as we strive to prevent infectious disease.

It is no coincidence that the headquarters of the AVN is based in the Northern Rivers region and its spokesperson and former president Mrs Meryl Dorey also lives in this region.

The Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) is familiar with the nature of the AVN. In 2009, two complaints were made against the AVN to the HCCC. These complaints alleged misleading and deceptive conduct surrounding advice given about vaccination. The HCCC investigated the complaints and made a recommendation that the AVN publish a disclaimer on its website. When the AVN refused to do so, the HCCC issued a public warning. The public warning stated:

The AVN's failure to include a notice on its website of the nature recommended by the Commission may result in members of the public making improperly informed decisions about whether or not to vaccinate, and therefore poses a risk to public health and safety.

The AVN took the HCCC to the Supreme Court claiming that the HCCC did not have jurisdiction over them and won. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/nsw/NSWSC/2012/110.html> (Appendix 3). It is important to note that during these proceedings, it was found by Justice Adamson that the AVN is a health care provider (Paragraph 15) and it is on this basis that we are making our submission. Significantly, the AVN were directed to change their name by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal on 25th November 2013 so “that it is not likely to mislead the public in relation to its main object” (Appendix 4) <http://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/action/pjudg?jgmid=168432> (Paragraph 3).

Our submission relates to AVN's Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/avn.living.wisdom?ref=ts&fref=ts> and their website <http://avn.org.au/>

It is our contention that the AVN regularly participates in

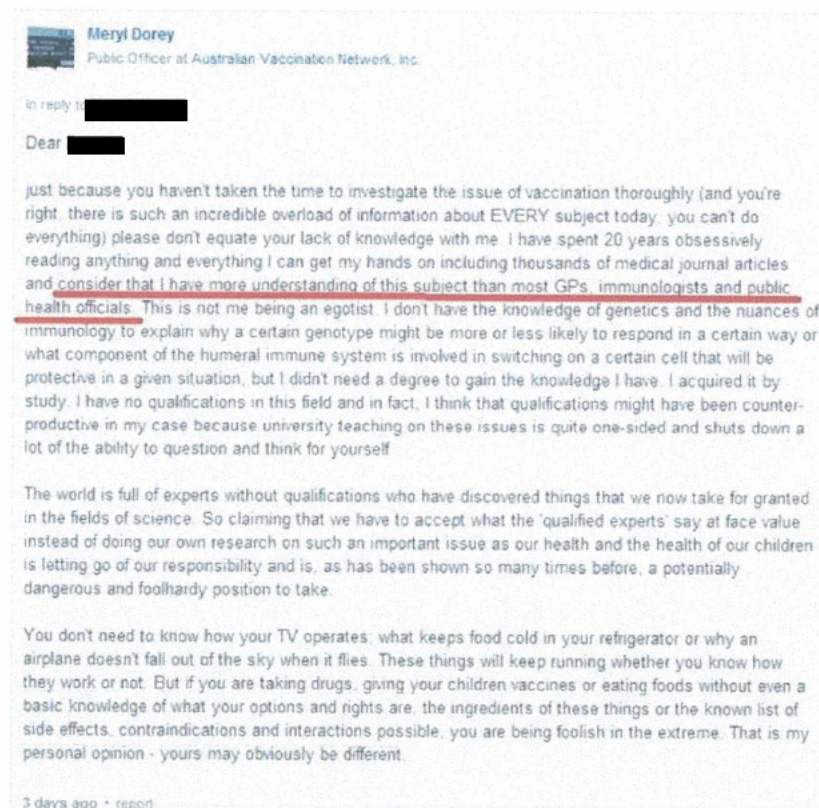
- a) The publication and/or dissemination of false or misleading health-related information that may cause general community mistrust of, or anxiety toward, accepted medical practice;
- b) The publication and/or dissemination of information that encourages individuals or the public to unsafely refuse preventative health measures, medical treatments, or cures;
- c) The promotion of health-related activities and/or provision of treatment that departs from accepted medical practice which may be harmful to individual or public health;

THE PUBLICATION AND/OR DISSEMINATION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION THAT MAY CAUSE GENERAL COMMUNITY MISTRUST OF, OR ANXIETY TOWARD, ACCEPTED MEDICAL PRACTICE;

Our group is of the view that the AVN are not only anti-vaccination, but that they are also anti-science and anti mainstream medicine. In a recent online article in The Conversation

<https://theconversation.com/court-decision-to-force-mmr-wasnt-in-childs-best-interest-20383>

(Appendix 5) about the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine, Meryl Dorey comments that she has "...more understanding of this subject (immunisation) than most GPs, immunologists and public health officials."



It takes an incredible amount of hubris and disdain for the medical community to claim that despite no qualifications at all she knows better than them. Anti-vaccinationists such as the AVN encourage a disdain for science because it does not support their irrational, misleading and ultimately dangerous views.

The key to understanding the mindset of the AVN is in what material they publish on their website and Facebook page and that material that is deleted or not published. They publish links on their Facebook page to articles such as this that encourage people not to trust their doctors

<http://thinkingmomsrevolution.com/to-the-medical-community-we-have-questions-lots-of-them/>

(Appendix 6)

They claim that a booklet called The Science of Immunisation sponsored by the Australian Academy of Science is a government propaganda exercise and part of a conspiracy to force compulsory

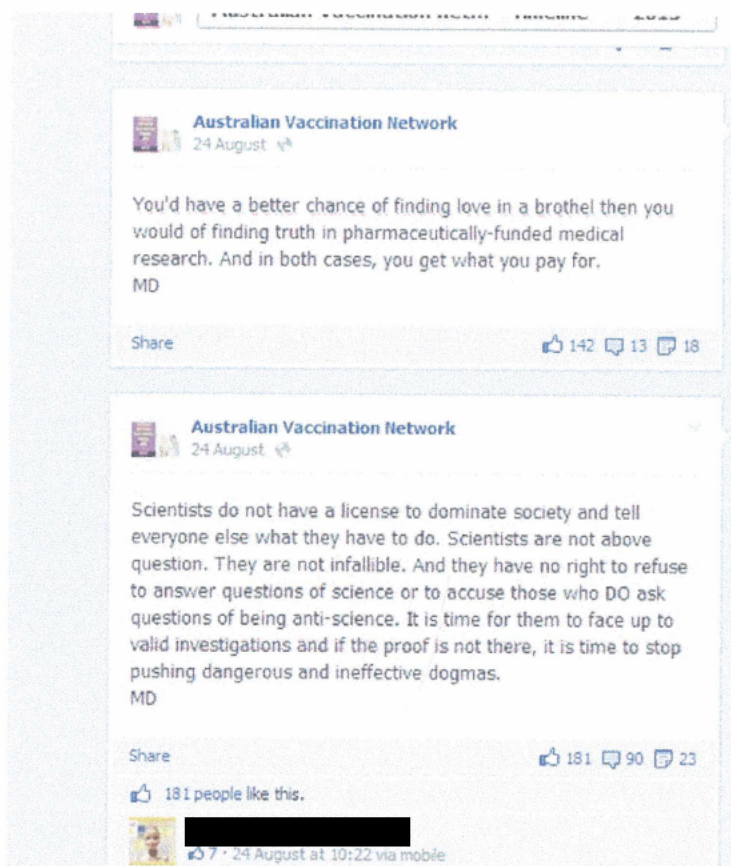
vaccination (Appendix 18) http://science.org.au/policy/documents/AAS_FINAL_HR_Nov26.pdf

(Appendix 7). They claim harassment and censorship by the government because “Medical interests have hijacked the machinery of the NSW government...”

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs121/1101800214009/archive/1115774015069.html> (Appendix 8).

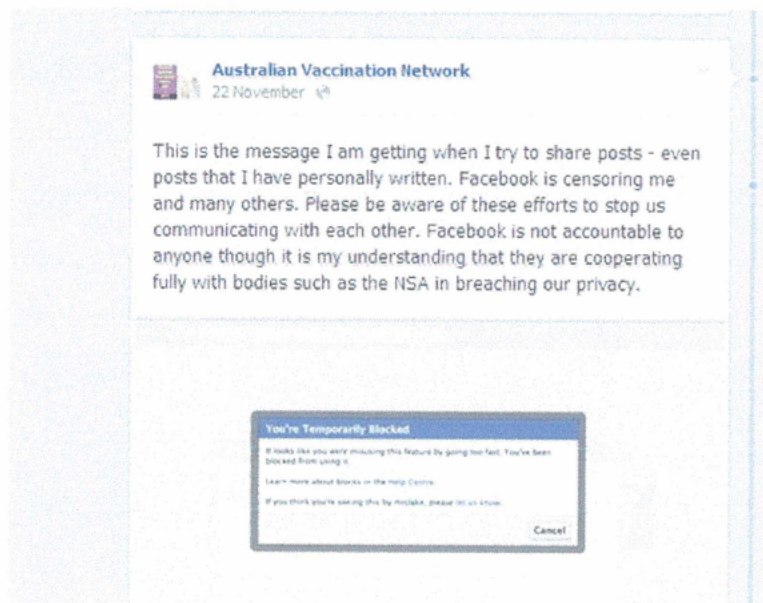
They claim that the recent decision handed down by the ADT is “sanctioned abuse” and suggest that Magistrate Nancy Hennessey was pressured to find against the AVN. There is a constant theme of a government and a judiciary that are all influenced by the behemoth of mainstream medicine that cannot be trusted. That there is some type of conspiracy and cover up.

It is curious that the AVN’s alleged oppression by “government” relates to both state and federal level, regardless of political persuasion. It is also curious that they express such a deep distrust of the judiciary given their readiness to participate in the judicial system. It is obvious to us that the AVN are conspiracy theorists and fringe dwellers. Unfortunately, even though they have no qualifications they can sound convincing to naive and insecure parents who are concerned about the welfare of their children. The following screenshot is an indication of the disdain that Mrs Dorey holds for science and medicine.



These people are so paranoid that they believe that Stop the AVN and Facebook are in cahoots to silence them. Are people who have such a warped world view to be trusted to provide accurate health information?

The following screenshots demonstrate this weird world view.



THE PUBLICATION AND / OR DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION THAT ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUALS OR THE PUBLIC TO UNSAFELY REFUSE PREVENTATIVE HEALTH MEASURES, MEDICAL TREATMENTS, OR CURES

Although they refuse to acknowledge it, it is well known that the AVN are anti-vaccination. That in itself would not be a problem if they didn't try so hard to dissuade other people from vaccinating as well. Until about a year ago Meryl Dorey was conducting regular seminars throughout the country to spread her misinformation <http://nocompulsoryvaccination.com/2012/08/22/1937/> (Appendix 9).

They also have no problem with attacking and ridiculing others in their efforts to minimise the efficacy of vaccines. One of our members, Mrs Alison Gaylard and her fully vaccinated family who live in Mullumbimby had the unfortunate experience of contracting whooping cough in March 2012. Mrs Gaylard decided to share her experience on the Facebook page of a group called Stop the AVN. She did this in an effort to warn others of the severity of the disease and how important it is to maintain high vaccination rates to achieve herd immunity.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/801ih9xlwbq2yw/PI%20SUBMISSION%20ALISON%20GAYLARD.pdf>

(Appendix 10)

Mrs Dorey took Mrs Gaylard's post and without consent wrote a blog about Mrs Gaylard's experience to try and prop up her view that vaccines are not effective and that Mrs Gaylard was somehow irrational. Mrs Dorey called the blog The Fear That Transcends Logic.

<http://nocompulsoryvaccination.com/2012/03/01/the-fear-that-transcends-logic/> (Appendix 11) Mrs Gaylard was devastated that her words were twisted to portray the exact opposite of what she intended. Mrs Gaylard requested that Mrs Dorey remove the blog and tried to comment on the blog but her comment wasn't published. The blog continued to receive comments for over a year with Mrs Dorey continuing to respond and yet never publishing the comment by Mrs Gaylard who was the subject of the blog.

I mentioned earlier that the AVN is selective about what they choose to publish and what they delete. Dr Rachel Heap is an intensive care specialist who tried to put some advice on the AVN Facebook page when someone posted incorrect information about treating tetanus. Her comments were deleted and she was banned from the page.

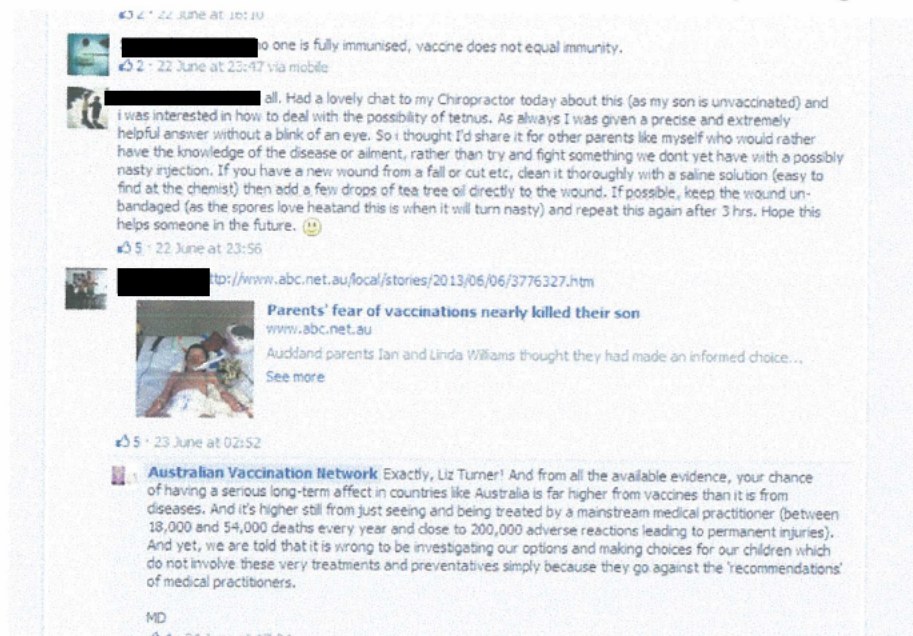
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qvhahcs90gcogga/Rachel%20Heap%20Submission%20%281%29.pdf>

(Appendix 12)

This is the thread that Dr Heap refers to:

<http://www.facebook.com/avn.living.wisdom/posts/10151545765121925> it is a perfect example of the level of paranoia, misguided priorities and sometimes complete lunacy that are at the heart of anti vaccination and the AVN. You can see lots of references to names that simply aren't there because they have been deleted. Interestingly of the 89 comments on that thread this one from Andrew Ho

managed to survive the purge. It emerges as a beacon of hope amongst the madness.



The link refers to anti-vaccination parents from New Zealand, who had a child in Intensive Care with a potentially lethal tetanus infection because of their views. This is exactly the potentially fatal situation that Dr Rachel Heap was trying to warn about when her posts were deleted. The AVN dismiss such warnings as 'fear mongering'. <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/06/06/3776327.htm> (Appendix 13).

[REDACTED] is a Microbiology Scientist who made a contribution to a thread on the AVN Facebook page and was treated with such disrespect by someone with no qualifications named [REDACTED] that it beggars belief. A reasonable person would think that a Microbiology Scientist might have a good if not excellent understanding of how vaccines work on infectious diseases but [REDACTED] chooses to call [REDACTED] contribution a "fairytale" <https://www.dropbox.com/s/kylr5yqewejol1/SubmissionAVNMarch2013.docx> (Appendix 14).

On another occasion, [REDACTED] also tried to support [REDACTED] advice about tetanus (given his expertise in microbiology) and was also deleted and banned.

[REDACTED] was formerly a paramedic and has also tried to contribute to the AVN Facebook page to correct misinformation. She also has had her comments deleted and been banned from the page. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ee3njb3g78nx7e/Heidi.pdf> (Appendix 15)

It is perfectly reasonable to question vaccines but that should only be the start of the conversation. It is not reasonable to ignore the answers from qualified people by deleting them. The AVN does not want to listen to anything that does not support their inflexible view. Mrs Dorey's view that she is an expert and doesn't need qualifications is the real problem, not vaccination.

THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND/OR PROVISION OF TREATMENT THAT DEPARTS FROM ACCEPTED MEDICAL PRACTICE WHICH MAY BE HARMFUL TO INDIVIDUAL OR PUBLIC HEALTH;

██████████ sent a complaint to the HCCC in July this year which is suitable for inclusion in this submission. It pertains to an inquiry on the AVN Facebook page about the use of the Anti-D injection during pregnancy. Meryl Dorey displays her complete ignorance of the topic by referring to a brand of Anti D that is only available in USA. She also refers to techniques such as delayed cord clamping also known as lotus birth that can possibly prevent the transfer of maternal to foetal antibodies. There is no evidence or any plausible mechanism to support this view. This shows that her information is gleaned from other unreliable sources on the internet rather than Red Cross which distributes the Anti D injection or CSL that manufactures it. ██████████ complaint is submitted as <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8hdabq0pmtjigmt/Fearon.pdf> (Appendix 16) and includes ██████████ letter of complaint, the Facebook screenshot, the Australian Red Cross Fact Sheet and the CSL Product Information.

The AVN has a history of promoting products that have no evidence to support any health benefit and seem to be potentially harmful. One of these products that also has the potential to steer people away from accepted medical practice is a banned substance known as Black Salve. The AVN originally had an advertisement on their website for a DVD called One Answer to Cancer that promoted the use of black salve. A complaint was made to the Therapeutic Goods Association (TGA) about the AVN's promotion of this product and the AVN was found to be in breach of a number of sections of the TGA and the AVN was ordered to publish a retraction on its website which it failed to comply with <http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/advertising-reg9-2012-04-022-black-salve.htm#.Uqgs9fQW3C4> (Appendix 17). As recently as last month Mrs Dorey was still campaigning to have this dangerous substance legalised.

Australian Vaccination Network shared a link.
22 November

Petition | Australian Government: Decriminalise the use of Cansema/Black Salve on human beings-please RT & sign
<http://ow.ly/r4gWt>



Australian Government: Decriminalise the use of Cansema/Black Salve on...
ow.ly

Cansema/Black Salve has been successfully removing cancer of all kinds for generations. Many people have treated Basal Cell skin cancers.

Share 19

47 people like this.

This comment has been hidden.
Unhide · Report · Block Lord

This comment has been hidden.
Unhide · Report · Block Agnieszka-Geisha

Australian Vaccination Network I've used it on a potential cancer on my shoulder and it cut it out - absolutely cut it out. And I used it on 2 other spots which I suspected of being cancerous and they didn't even turn red - a sign that the black salve was able to differentiate between diseased and healthy tissue.

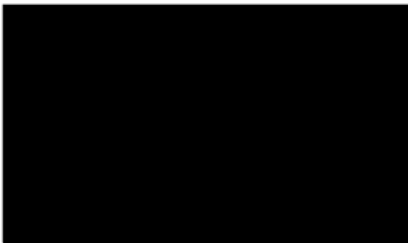
The TGA has tried to stop me from speaking about it. They stopped the AVN from selling Elaine Hollingworth's excellent DVD about this subject called One Answer to Cancer even though it is available in many other places online. There is a huge effort to take away our rights to communicate freely on any health issue unless we are speaking the government line. If you are not getting involved in

http://www.facebook.com/avn.living.wisdom/posts/10151862980866925?comment_id=28416470&offset=0&total_comments=10

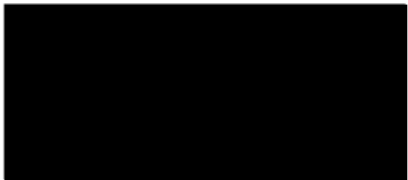
As you can see from our submission there is sufficient evidence to show that the AVN's activities fall within the parameters of a),b), and c) of the terms of reference for this inquiry. We humbly request that the committee call Mrs Meryl Dorey and Mr Greg Beattie to appear before it to answer the allegations we have made and to justify their continual opposition to mainstream medicine despite the evidence.

A number of members of NRVS have offered to appear before the committee if required. These include:

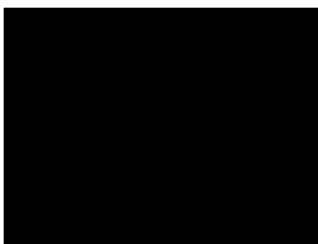
Alison Lawson Gaylard



Heidi Kim Robertson



Dr Rachel Heap



Yours sincerely,



Alison Lawson Gaylard
Spokesperson NRVS

Appendices

1. Annual Immunisation Coverage Report 2010. NCIRS March 2013
[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdi3701-pdf-cnt.htm/\\$FILE/cdi3701b.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdi3701-pdf-cnt.htm/$FILE/cdi3701b.pdf)
2. Herd Immunity – Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herd_immunity
3. Australian Vaccination Network Inc v Health Care Complaints Commission [2012] NSWSC 110 (24 February 2012) <http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/nsw/NSWSC/2012/110.html>
4. Australian Vaccination Network Inc v Department of Finance & Services [2013] NSWADT 266
<http://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/action/pjudg?igmtid=168432>
5. The Conversation 19th November 2013 Court decision to force MMR wasn't in child's best interest Prof David Hunter <https://theconversation.com/court-decision-to-force-mmr-wasnt-in-childs-best-interest-20383>
6. To the Medical Community: We Have Questions. Lots Of Them.
<http://thinkingmomsrevolution.com/to-the-medical-community-we-have-questions-lots-of-them/>
7. The Science of Immunisation – Questions and Answers November 2012
http://www.science.org.au/policy/documents/AAS_FINAL_HR_Nov26.pdf
8. Australian Vaccination Network Media Release 25th November 2013
<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs121/1101800214009/archive/1115774015069.html>
9. Central NSW Seminar tour – first impressions. Blog August 22nd 2012
<http://nocompulsoryvaccination.com/2012/08/22/1937/>
10. Mrs Alison Gaylard's Experience
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/801ih9xlwbq2yw/PI%20SUBMISSION%20ALISON%20GAYLAR%20D.pdf>
11. The fear that transcends logic 01 March 2012 – blog
<http://nocompulsoryvaccination.com/2012/03/01/the-fear-that-transcends-logic/>
12. Dr Rachel Heap's experience
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qvhahcs90gcogga/Rachel%20Heap%20Submission%20%281%29.pdf>
<http://www.facebook.com/avn.living.wisdom/posts/10151545765121925>
13. Parents' fear of vaccinations nearly killed their son: ABC News 6th June 2013
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/06/06/3776327.htm>

14. Mr Dale Thorley's experience 17th March 2013
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kylr5yqgewejj0l/SubmissionAVNMarch2013.docx>
15. Ms Heidi Robertson's experience <https://www.dropbox.com/home/PI%20Submissions>
16. Dr Pearson's complaint to HCCC 4th July 2013
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/xa5ih9d1i5cmkcr/Fearon.pdf>
http://www.facebook.com/avn.living.wisdom/posts/10151567382686925?comment_id=26750882&offset=0&total_comments=29
http://www.csl.com.au/s1/cs/auhq/1199978997194/Web_Product_C/1196562710368/ProductDetail.htm
<http://www.transfusion.com.au/sites/default/files/iTRANSFUSE%202.6%20IMMUNOGLOBULIN.pdf>
http://www.csl.com.au/s1/cs/auhq/1199978997194/Web_Product_C/1196562710368/ProductDetail.htm
17. Decision under regulation 9 of the Therapeutic Goods Regulations 1990 in relation to an advertisement about the product 'black salve' (Complaint no. 2012-04-022)
<http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/advertising-reg9-2012-04-022-black-salve.htm#.Uqgs9fQW3C4>
18. Government and AMA funded booklet – an exercise in propaganda.
<http://avn.org.au/2012/11/government-and-ama-funded-booklet-an-exercise-in-propaganda/>