

**Letter to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)**

**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013**

**Re The representation of balanced arguments in the media on the issue of vaccination**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have now witnessed many media programs on vaccination that do not properly represent the views of consumers on the issue of vaccination. Vaccines have been included in a public health policy and as such consumers are the main stakeholders in the use of these 'drugs' that are given to healthy individuals. It is essential that consumers are allowed to participate in debates on public health policies yet the media is informing the public that the presentation of consumer arguments on the issue of vaccination represents 'false balance'. This is a fallacious argument and it has now been used by both Channel 10's program 'The project' and by the ABC's program 'MediaWatch'. Both of these stations have used this argument of 'false balance' to justify not allowing consumers to represent the scientific arguments that support a policy of 'choice' in the use of vaccines.

The false balance argument was used by Jonathon Holmes on MediaWatch on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 when his program criticized Wollongong's WIN TV for presenting both sides of the argument on this public health policy: **which is what journalists are required to do.**

Programs that do not present all the science in a scientific debate are presenting propaganda. In addition, these programs informed the public that consumer's arguments are 'unscientific'. This is untrue and again it represents propaganda. Here is my feedback on Jonathon Holmes's program about 'false balance' <http://www.vaccinationdecisions.net/immunisation-updates/jonathon-holmes-mediawatch-program-measles-false-balance-exposed-1st-oct-2012-an-exercise-in-propaganda>

Vaccines are drugs that are being promoted in Australia in a public health policy that is linked to \$2,100 in welfare benefits and to mandating vaccines for health students and practitioners in the workplace. In other words, Australia now has coercive vaccination policies and to refuse a vaccine individuals are required to fill out a conscientious objector's form that is signed by a medical practitioner. The public is entitled to debate the science in public health policies and as the major stakeholder they must be equally represented in decisions that are made on public health policy. This policy is about drugs for healthy individuals *not sick individuals* and about a public health policy for the community good.

Therefore consumers have the right to assess and debate the risks and benefits of using multiple vaccines in healthy individuals.

I would like to make a formal complaint about the lack of representation of consumers in the media debate of vaccination and ask you to investigate any media stations that are using this argument of 'false balance' to exclude consumers from the debate. I am also aware that many subscribers of the lobby group called the Skeptics are presenting misinformation to the public about vaccination on the internet and I would like you to investigate this organisation. Some of the misinformation they are presenting can be found on my website on the following link <http://www.vaccinationdecisions.net/lobby-groups.php>

As well as justifying the lack of representation of consumers on the vaccination debate, Channel 10 has presented a subscriber of the Skeptics to the public to promote the government's vaccination policies. This subscriber, Dr. Rachael Dunlop has actively prevented the public from viewing scientific information that was presented to health professionals at a health promotion conference in Perth 2009. Dr. Rachael Dunlop is the vice-president of the Australian Skeptics, yet this position was not mentioned to the public and this is significant because there are many supporters of this organisation that are presenting false and misleading information about vaccines and individuals on the internet and in the mainstream media. Here is a link to this misinformation

<http://www.vaccinationdecisions.net/immunisation-updates/channel-10-s-and-the-misinformation-provided-by-dr-rachael-dunlop-on-vaccination>

Please could you investigate this complaint and ensure that lobby groups are not able to influence this debate by discrediting individuals on the internet and by preventing the inclusion of some of the science in the debate in the mainstream media. *All* the science must be included in the debates and decisions in the development of this public health policy.

I have copied this across to academics at the university and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Judy