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Child Care NSW supports immunisation changes

Child Care New South Wales has today announced its support for legislative amendments to require children to be immunised or have a certified exemption in order to enrol in child care centres in NSW.

“Whilst our strong preference would be for children not to be excluded as a result of their parents’ choices, the message is clear: forgetfulness and complacency is not an excuse for the health and safety of our children” Child Care NSW President Vicki Skoulogenis said today.

The legislative amendments to be debated in Parliament today are expected to include a requirement for parents to present either the current immunisation status of their child/ren, or a certified exemption explaining why they have not been immunised in order for them to be enrolled in preschools and child care centres.

“Child care centres already keep detailed, on-site registers of children’s immunisation status” Ms Skoulogenis said. “These amendments will simply require centres to add the exemption form to that register for those children who have an approved explanation for not being immunised – a relatively small paperwork burden for what we hope will be an improved health outcome”.

Child Care NSW surveyed members late last week on their views on preventing unimmunised children from being enrolled at their centres. Responses were received from almost 200 child care centers across the state.

“The message from members is clear. They do not want to be the judge and jury on immunisation” Ms Skoulogenis said. “Although 57% of members see a clear role for child care centres in educating families about immunisation, only 34% of centres said they would have *voluntarily* introduced a policy to exclude unimmunised children from their centres”.

“Whilst immunisation is obviously a contentious and highly emotive issue for some, let’s remember that child care centres will simply be implementing government policy” Ms Skoulogenis said. “The last thing we want to see is child care centres being picketed by the anti-vaccination lobby on the first day of this new policy”.

“Our members are relieved that there will be a statewide, clear and consistent policy on this issue” Ms Skoulogenis said. “We will be working closely with NSW Health and the Department of Education and Communities to update members’ policies and procedures to ensure they are ready for the 1 January 2014 commencement of the policy”.

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