

**Subject: MEDIA RELEASE - PRIME MINISTER - NEW RULES FOR VACCINE REFUSERS IN A BOOST FOR CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATION - 18 AUGUST 2013**

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Campaign Media Release  
Prime Minister Kevin Rudd  
Minister for Families Jenny Macklin  
Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek

## **NEW RULES FOR VACCINE REFUSERS IN A BOOST FOR CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATION**

The Rudd Labor Government will put in place new measures to boost childhood immunisation rates across Australia and help ensure our children get the best possible start in life.

Under a re-elected Rudd Labor Government, all children will have to be fully immunised in order to receive the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement.

Parents who register as 'conscientious objectors' will no longer be eligible to receive this payment. Exemptions will apply on medical and religious grounds only.

The science cannot be disputed. Immunisation is the safest and most effective way for parents to protect their children from disease, and one of the most important public health measures at our disposal.

A recent report by the National Health Performance Authority confirmed that Australia has high rates of childhood immunisation at the national level, with

averages at or around 90 per cent.

But the report also found a lot of variation in immunisation rates at the local level, and highlighted the need to increase rates further, particularly in regions where coverage is below the national average.

In one Medicare Local catchment area, there were 3,600 children not fully immunised across the key age groups of one, two and five years of age.

The Rudd Labor Government is concerned that children in some communities are at risk of contracting diseases such as measles and whooping cough, and putting others at risk, too.

Under Labor, families have been required to have their children fully immunised in order to receive the Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement since 1 July 2012.

The supplement, worth \$726 per child each year, is only paid once a child is fully immunised at one, two and five years of age.

This provide families with an incentive of more than \$2,100 to ensure their children are fully immunised.

However, exemptions for parents who register as 'conscientious objectors' to immunisation have always applied.

The changes announced today will further strengthen Australia's childhood immunisation rules, and build on a range of other important initiatives the Federal Labor Government has taken to increase childhood immunisation rates.

Most parents do the right thing and get their kids immunised – this change won't make a difference to them. But Labor believes we can do even more to encourage all parents to do the right thing, through education and providing a stronger financial incentive.

Labor is committed to protecting Australian children against preventable disease, and we know that increasing immunisation rates is the best way to do this. It's the right thing to do for children, families, and the whole community.

Labor's Medicare Locals are playing a key role in ensuring Australian children

are immunised. If Tony Abbott was elected, scrapping Medicare Locals would result in a cut of more \$1.8 billion to primary health care services and 3,000 health jobs.

This commitment does not involve any costs to the budget.

**18 AUGUST 2013**

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