



On the Question of Kindergartens and Vaccinations

An open letter to members of the Victorian Parliament

In light of what appears to be a lack of open discussion, I take this opportunity to raise some concerns with regards proposed legislation by the current Victorian Government that significantly shifts responsibilities away from families and increasingly into the domain of either government or, of even greater concern, established bureaucracy. I refer in this instance to the proposed legislation to prevent participation in Kindergartens of healthy children whose parents have responsibly exercised their minority view in relation to their child's vaccination.

My concern has naught to do with the effectiveness or otherwise of vaccinations. Nor has it to do with the determinations families may make in coming to a decision either consenting to, or withholding consent from, vaccinating their child after having considered both its likely benefits as well as taking into consideration known and possible vaccination risks. It should be apparent that whatever their decision, parental determinations will, in a diverse democratic state, include those of minority views.

Quite simply, the proposed legislation appears to shift responsibility from the family to the State (embodied in the position of a Minister), and on that basis alone should at the very least raise concerns for anyone who values a free western democracy, where adults are deemed able to make decisions regarding options around health, education, religious practice, or even purchasing options for and on behalf of their families. Certainly various health considerations need to be taken into account. Where healthy children are to be legislatively excluded from healthy community engagement and participation as well as the benefits of early childhood education, or parents exercising their responsibilities penalised, concerns about the direction of government policy needs to be taken up by our own elected representatives. It is not for the government to implement the views of bureaucracies – which unfortunately appears to increasingly be occurring – but rather for the public sector to implement, within the context of a representative democracy, just and fair laws.

This is an area that certainly has direct impact on schools and kindergartens, and claws into the very fabric of personal freedom as well as choices parents may make with regards both their child's social participation and health choices. I am here reminded of all too many instances that 20th century european history should have taught each and everyone of us. In addition, it effectively seeks to make of schools and kindergartens, including independent ones, into an instrument of the State.

The proposed legislation, or at least the implications that have so far been released by members of the current Victorian government, further diminishes independence, autonomy, and reflects a view that patronises us, its citizens, as though unable to make informed decisions.

I trust that due consideration is sensitively weighed for any proposed legislation by each MP, and especially each member of the opposition, on this as well as all too many similar matters.

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