

Study finds new vaccination rules remind forgetful parents but fail to impact objectors

April 15 2016, by Mark Smith



Western Sydney University research has found new vaccination regulations for parents looking to enroll their children in NSW child care centers has succeeded in reminding forgetful parents, but failed to affect conscientious objectors.

The study, published in the journal *Public Health Research & Practice*, interviewed the [directors](#) of ten [child care](#) centers in the Northern Rivers

region of NSW, an area marked by low [vaccination rates](#) among infants.

The [research](#) team consisted of experts from the North Coast Public Health Unit, the Western Sydney School of Medicine and The University Centre for Rural Health.

New regulations require child-care facilities to acquire documentation proving [children](#) are fully vaccinated, on a catch-up schedule, exempt for medical reasons, or a conscientious objector who has been counseled by an authorised vaccination provider.

"Immunisation is an effective [public health](#) intervention, but more than 75 000 Australian children are still not fully vaccinated," says Ms Marianne Trent, from the North Coast Public Health Unit.

"By interviewing the directors of child care centers, we have gained an insight into new regulations requiring child-care facilities to collect evidence of complete vaccination, or approved exemption, before enrolment."

Across Australia, 91.5 per cent of five-year-old children are fully immunised, but only 67 per cent of five-year-olds are fully immunised in the Broken Head postcodes in the Northern Rivers, and 70 per cent in Brunswick Heads postcodes.

During the interviews, researchers asked the local childcare center directors how the new requirements had affected parents enrolling in childcare, and the impact on internal administrative practices.

In the study ([opens in new window](#)), all the directors believed adequate notice had been given to implement the new changes, with the majority reporting an increased vigilance with regards to paperwork in anticipation of future audits.

Yet despite the new regulations, the directors perceived that the views of conscientious objectors remained unchanged.

Overall, child-care center directors believed the amendment had been successfully implemented in the Northern Rivers region, and particularly effective in prompting parents who had forgotten to vaccinate.

"The effects of the amendment were felt to be largely complementary to other effective public health policies that are in place. For one center, it also aided the identification of unvaccinated children during an outbreak," says Ms Trent.

"Further research and tracking of vaccination rates over time are required to show whether the amendment affected vaccination rates."

More information: Alice Fraser et al. Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Act 2013: its impact in the Northern Rivers, NSW, *Public Health Research & Practice* (2016). [DOI: 10.17061/phrp2621620](https://doi.org/10.17061/phrp2621620)

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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