

Date: January 27th, 2016

Australasian Medical Research and Clinical Societies applaud support of vaccination by University of Wollongong academics.

In response to some recent controversyⁱ, leading members of the University of Wollongong Faculties of Social Sciences, Science, Medicine and Health have released a statement setting out the scientific evidence that immunisation is safe, effective, and responsible for preventing major illness and loss of life from infection, pointing out that immunisation has led to a 99% drop in deaths from vaccine preventable diseases.ⁱⁱ

We write, on behalf of approximately 5,000 of Australia and New Zealand's most prominent scientific researchers and clinicians working with infectious diseases and the means for their management and prevention,ⁱⁱⁱ in direct support of this statement.

It is beyond doubt that vaccination represents one of the safest and most effective means of protecting us against a range of devastating infectious diseases. The systems in place for evidence-based evaluation of vaccines are characterised by excellence and integrity. The effectiveness of vaccination programs critically relies on a very high proportion of the community being vaccinated in order to protect the most vulnerable members. These include babies and toddlers, the elderly and those with impaired immunity for medical reasons; this phenomenon is known as 'herd immunity'. Misinformation about vaccines may lead people to decide against vaccination, which could lead to increases in illness and death and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Australia's scientists, clinicians and researchers in the fields of Microbiology, Virology, Immunology, and Infectious Diseases, represented by the signatories of this letter, strongly endorse free academic debate and rigorous independent review of public policy, and we strongly support the academic staff of the University of Wollongong in their endeavours to maintain the highest levels of intellectual rigour and integrity in doing so.

Professor Dale Godfrey, past President, Australasian Society for Immunology

Professor Christopher Goodnow, President, Australasian Society for Immunology

Professor Jonathan Iredell, President, Australian Society for Microbiology

Professor Cheryl Jones, President, Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases

Professor Alexander Khromykh, Treasurer, Australasian Virology Society

Professor Nigel McMillan, President, Australasian Virology Society.

Gustav Nossal, Emeritus Professor, University of Melbourne.

Professor Damian Purcell past President, Australasian Virology Society.

Professor Roy Robins-Browne, President-elect, Australian Society for Microbiology

Dr Peter Speck, Secretary, Australasian Virology Society.

Professor Melanie Wong, President, Australasian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy

Professor Paul Young, past President, Australian Society for Microbiology

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ⁱ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/health-science/antivaccination-activists-spruik-phd-thesis-as-proof-of-conspiracy/news-story/d74552da1a6875e2b0eea290094b590b>

ⁱⁱ <http://socialsciences.uow.edu.au/has/UOW208852.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ The Australasian Virology Society, the Australasian Society for Immunology, the Australasian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy, the Australian Society for Microbiology and the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases