August 5, 2010

Urgent update - what is happening with the AVN?

Hello to all of our wonderful AVN members and supporters,

It has been a very 'interesting' few weeks since my last enewsletter to you all and longer than we normally have between communications as there has been much to do and many things to think about and decide upon. I know you will understand the need to carefully consider our options before coming to you to discuss them.

As you all would be aware, the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) illegally 'investigated' the AVN, and asked us to put a statement on our website to say, amongst other things, that we were anti-vaccine. We refused to do so and, as a result, they released a statement that we were providing deceptive and misleading information and were a danger to the public. The implications of this action are much further-reaching than the AVN as I will explain a bit further on.

This HCCC decision has been used by many other organisations and the media to defame and slander us - and why is that? Because we provide help and support to a sector of the Australian population that the government
wishes didn’t exist - those who question authority, think for themselves and make health and wellness choices that go against the government’s and the medical community’s wishes. People like us should not exist as far as these bodies are concerned and they see the AVN as one of the ‘ringleaders’ if you will, of this sort of thinking.

Will these actions stop us?

What they don’t yet realise is that those who think for themselves will not stop their questioning and seeking if the AVN is no longer there. There are many other organisations across Australia and around the world that perform the same role as the AVN. And whilst nationally, we may have provided a focus for this intelligent and proactive group of Australians, we are not the be-all and end-all for informed choice. This philosophy will continue, and those who practice holistic healing and others who use natural therapists will continue their searching and their activism whether we are there or not - but truly, we would like to still be here.

Right now, we are blocked at every turn because of this HCCC finding - and that was the whole idea behind this. Even the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing (OLGR) which openly admits that they found no evidence of fraud in the breaches they discovered in our operations - breaches of a purely administrative nature - have said that the HCCC findings will influence their final decision which is due out shortly.

HCCC - Jurisdiction and botched investigations

And the HCCC had no jurisdiction to investigate us. Three lawyers, two barristers and a QC have all said this is the case. The HCCC acted outside their jurisdiction and outside the law.

It is certainly not the first time the HCCC has acted in an
incorrect manner and this body, set up to protect the people of NSW from incompetent and dangerous doctors, seems to have a long history of being partial to the medical profession whilst coming down hammers and tongs against those in the natural health arena.

The Walker Inquiry into the HCCC - available here; and the inquiry into the HCCC's botched investigation of Graeme Reeves - found here, are but two examples.

Their investigation of the AVN took approximately 12 months and cost an untold amount of money. It was biased from the beginning and it appears to me that the verdict was evident before we made our very first submission last September.

**So what do we do?**

We have been advised that a win for us in the courts would deal a serious blow to those who wish for our extinction. It will also be a very positive step for everyone involved in the natural therapies movement - either as a practitioner or a health consumer.

And we are certainly not giving up. We have a lot of work to do and an awful lot of plans that are nearing fruition.

For instance, we are planning on sending a delegation to Canberra for the next sitting of Parliament (when we actually have a government in place, that is) to request the following changes to Federal legislation:

1- **A requirement for all health practitioners to report vaccine reactions to the TGA when these reactions are reported to them by parents.** For the purposes of this legislation, the definition of an adverse reaction will be defined as those listed in Appendix 6 of the 9th Edition of the Australian Immunisation Handbook. The penalties involved in either failing to or refusing to report will be a loss of bonuses paid under the General Practice Immunisation Incentive (GPII).

2- **A requirement to reveal the vaccination status of those who contract 'vaccine preventable' illnesses.** Currently, this information is not tracked and indeed, the forms used by doctors don't even ask for this information, leading to a gap in our knowledge about the effectiveness of the currently-licensed vaccines.

3- **The funding of a study using the already-available information from the Australian**
Childhood Immunisation Register's (ACIR's) database which currently tracks who is vaccinated and who is not. The ACIR is linked with the Medicare database, meaning that this study will be inexpensive and easy. This study would provide information comparing the amount of Medicare money spent on healthcare for vaccinated Australians as compared with unvaccinated Australians. This information will give us a good indication of the overall health status of both groups.

We have just uploaded a petition to the Petition Site to support our efforts in Canberra. If you could please sign this petition and forward this newsletter to your network (friends, family, business associates, Facebook pages, MySpace, Twitter, etc.), that would be really helpful. Our goal is to reach 10,000 signatures and since we may need to be going to Canberra in the next 3-4 weeks, time is of the essence.

In addition, we have made contact (finally!) with labs and researchers overseas who are willing to work with us on testing the currently-licensed Australian vaccines for the presence of heavy metals and other ingredients such as vegetable oils. If these results come back as we expect they will, this information may well blow the currently-held beliefs in the safety of modern vaccines out of the water.

**Our future can be exciting!**

So whether we stay open or are forced to close as is currently being threatened, we will be accomplishing many of our goals before the anti-choice movement has its way.

And the only reason why we are able to do these things; the only reason why we have been as effective a group as we are - is because of you. You, our members and supporters, have always been there for us - and I'd like to think that we have always been there for you.
In our last fund-raiser, when I asked for help, you gave until it hurt. It was embarrassing! I got letters from people who were struggling making ends meet who were donating $10 because that was all they could afford. And that $10 might have meant that they went without something essential that week and I honestly did not know what to say except "Thank You!"

We will not ask for donations of this sort again - you have already done so much and until the bitter end, we will thank you. We take your support seriously and are doing all we possibly can to ensure that in the time we have left, we will be able to educate, support and protect the rights of Australian families everywhere.

**The one best chance**

After discussions with our legal advisers, we have been told that there is one chance for us to overcome the push to shut us down - and it is far from 100% even if we are successful.

In speaking with many other organisations and seeking out the best possible legal advice, we have discovered that this is not the first time the HCCC has stepped outside of its jurisdiction to persecute a non-profit organisation. There is another group who was in our situation less than a decade ago.

They fought against the HCCC - all the way to the Supreme Court. And they won! It cost them $150,000 - but they got every cent back and more because the court found that the HCCC had acted outside of its jurisdiction when they tried to prosecute this organisation.

We have lawyers, barristers and a QC lined up who all have experience in this area. My husband and I were so committed to this course of action that we were considering selling our farm to fund it. But we did not feel it would be right for us to put our children's future on the line in this way so, after discussions with our legal team, we have come up with another option. It is a long shot - but I'm going to lay it out on the table for you.

As I said, we will not seek donations from our members - so please don't worry about donating as an individual.

If you have a business however, and are in a position to donate a larger amount - say $10,000 to $20,000 - and this donation can be given as sponsorship so it will be tax-deductible, then we want to know about it.

We are not asking you to give us your money at this point in time. Like we did when we had our large fund-raiser
earlier this year, we are only asking for pledges. If we get enough pledges to get this action going (and we need a minimum of $100,000 - $150,000), then we will go for it. We will NOT give up if we are given the means to fight. I'm in this until the bitter end if businesses will support me, as is the rest of our incredibly dedicated committee.

**Why your business should help the AVN**

![Image](image_url)

We are talking about a lot of money here. This is not a call for a few thousand dollars. This is the biggest call for funds we have ever made - and again, we are not making this call to individuals, but to businesses.

We can win this case. And when we do - it will not just help the AVN - it will help so many others.

You may not be aware of this, but the persecution of the AVN has started a tidal wave which is reaching out to all other natural therapies and therapists. Many of these organisations have not wanted to be involved with our group though many of their individual members have been long-time supporters. Let's face it - this is a very controversial issue and as you can see by what's happened with me and the rest of the AVN - when you raise your profile as being a pro-information advocate, you are likely to get knocked down in a very ugly way.
So for 17 years, natural therapy organisations have used our resources and directed patients to us for help and support, but in general, they, and many therapists have not taken a stand on this issue.

**What has the result of this been?**

The National Registration Board of the CAA is trying to put through a policy which will require that Chiropractors not be allowed to discuss vaccination with their patients. Instead, they will be required to direct parents to a GP for answers to any questions they may have. There are also moves afoot to require that Chiropractic students receive the same 10 vaccines in school that medical and allied health professionals do.

There is a bloc in the WA Parliament that is trying to get homeopathy outlawed due to one woman's choice to use homeopathic remedies to treat her cancer - a treatment which ultimately failed - but that was her choice. The 100 Australians who die every day on chemotherapy are not considered in this equation - but one woman who dies whilst using a natural therapy is a reason to destroy a 200-year old evidence-based therapy that is in competition with allopathy.

And every day now, there are more and more supplement manufacturers, suppliers of herbal medicines, Chinese herbal medicine producers and others who provide healthy, natural products, who are being targeted, not allowed to advertise their products or services and shut down by the TGA and their minions.

The AVN has always been there for these groups - we and our members have supported you. Now, it's time to see if you have the intestinal fortitude to stand tall and support not only the AVN's but your own continued survival.

If you own a natural therapies manufacturing company; if you are in a group of practitioners who would each like to chip in $1,000; if you have a business of any kind and believe in what the AVN stands for; please consider making a pledge to form a fighting fund that will see us moving forward and continuing to help and support Australian families and Australian practitioners.

We will need to make our final decision on this fairly soon so please let us know if you are able to pledge your support by the 30th of September. Call me (Meryl) in the office any week day on 02 6687 1699 to ask any questions you may have about this. Remember, your pledges will be taken as sponsorship so you will be able to claim them on your tax return.
With the power of your backing, we can act as a formidable group to fight for everyone's rights to natural health choice and our own right to support and inform Australian parents and practitioners. If we don't act now, we will be setting a dangerous precedent for all natural therapies and for the support groups that will come after us.

Are you Following Us?

Social media is the new buzzword and, though we resisted the pull of participating in this new 'craze', we have now jumped in with both feet and find that between our blog, our Facebook page and Twitter, we are able to keep people better informed about what is going on in the world of vaccination information and the AVN then ever before.

In addition, these outlets have enabled us to liaise with similar groups from around the world and to share support and information on an almost instantaneous basis.

If you are not yet following us, you don't know what you're missing!

Below are links to just a few of our recent blog articles you may want to have a look at. If you want to make sure you never miss a new blog post, please visit our blog page by clicking here and enter your email address into the
form you will find at the top of the page (please see image below). Then, you will be sent an email every time a new item is posted.

Violence or the Threat of Violence Against Those Who Believe In Choice

Upon what do we base our decisions?

A Grieving Family and Baseless Accusations

Confusing the Poor Parents

Our Facebook page is also very active and a fantastic place to go for sharing information and support. With over 2,000 members, this is a wonderful and loving venue. If you are on Facebook and would like to check us out, please just click the link below and if you like what you see, click on the Friend link on the left hand side so you can participate in all the great discussions.

Lastly, our twitter updates are going out daily. If you think Twitter is silly, just try writing War and Peace in 140 characters or less - it’s quite an art! So please check us out on the link below and if you follow us, we will try to follow you back too.

Please share the information by forwarding to a friend!

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