

PUBLIC WARNING ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN VACCINATION NETWORK (AVN)

26 July 2010

by the Health Care Complaints Commission under section 94A of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993

The Health Care Complaints Commission has investigated two complaints about the Australian Vaccination Network (AVN), a non-profit organisation registered in New South Wales that provides information about vaccination. The complaints alleged that the AVN provides incorrect and misleading information about vaccination.

The Commission's investigation of the complaints focussed on the material presented by the AVN on its website www.avn.org.au.

The Commission's investigation established that the AVN website:

- provides information that is solely anti-vaccination
- contains information that is incorrect and misleading
- quotes selectively from research to suggest that vaccination may be dangerous.

On this basis, the Commission recommended to the AVN that it should include a statement in a prominent position on its website to the following effect:

- The AVN's purpose is to provide information against vaccination, in order to balance what it believes is the substantial amount of pro-vaccination information available elsewhere.
- The information provided by the AVN should not be read as medical advice.
- The decision about whether or not to vaccinate should be made in consultation with a health care provider.

The Commission recognises that it is important for there to be debate on the issue of vaccination. However, the AVN provides information that is inaccurate and misleading.

The AVN's failure to include a notice on its website of the nature recommended by the Commission may result in members of the public making improperly informed decisions about whether or not to vaccinate, and therefore poses a risk to public health and safety.

Further Information

For further information, contact Mr Kim Swan, the Executive Officer of the Health Care Complaints Commission, on 9219 7483 or send an email to media@hccc.nsw.gov.au.