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## Conflicts of interest influencing Australia's vaccination policy - Murdoch media/News Corp

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The contents of this email have been submitted to Prime Minister Scott Morrison via the 'Contact Your PM' facility: <https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm> (19 December 2019)

### For the attention of:

Mr Scott Morrison,  
Prime Minister of Australia  
(Former Minister for Social Services)

Dear Mr Morrison

### Re: Conflicts of interest influencing Australia's vaccination policy - Murdoch media/News Corp

Murdoch media/News Corp has been very influential on Australia's taxpayer-funded vaccination policy via its prolonged No Jab, No Play media campaign, which resulted in the Federal Government's No Jab, No Pay law, and various State Government No Jab, No Play laws. A *Daily Telegraph* article published on 11 April 2015 boasts of the "tough new rules won by *The Sunday Telegraph*".[1]

However, the general public is largely unaware that Murdoch media/News Corp has a serious conflict of interest with its influential No Jab, No Play vaccination media campaign in that Murdoch media groups News Corp and Foxtel are corporate partners of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, an organisation which is involved in vaccine research.[2] The Murdoch Children's Research Institute's website notes that its Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGo) "provides evidence to shape Government policy regarding best use of vaccines in national schedules".[3]

Mr Morrison, according to a *Sydney Morning Herald* report in September 2015 titled **Scott Morrison will almost certainly lead the Liberals. The question is when?**, it was leaked that **you had a private lunch with media mogul Rupert Murdoch while you were the Minister for Social Services**.[4]

Mr Morrison, I would appreciate your response to the following questions:

- During your private lunch with Mr Rupert Murdoch in 2015, or at any other time, **did you discuss Australia's vaccination policy with Mr Murdoch**, e.g. the No Jab, No Pay bill which was raised in response to the Murdoch media/News Corp's No Jab, No Play media campaign for coercive vaccination?[5] (The No Jab, No Pay bill was enacted as Federal law in January 2016, and subsequently various State No Jab, No Play laws.)
- **Are you aware that Murdoch media/News Corp had a conflict of interest in pressing for a coercive vaccination law**, i.e. News Corp and Foxtel are corporate partners of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute[6], an organisation which is involved in vaccine research, including research on the GlaxoSmithKline (formerly Novartis) Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product?[7] (The original Murdoch Institute was founded with the support of Rupert Murdoch's mother Dame Elisabeth Murdoch and her family and others.[8])
- **Are you aware that the former Chair of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), Professor Terry Nolan, is the leader of the Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGo)**, a collaboration between the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health at the University of Melbourne? VIRGo has received funding from vaccine manufacturers GSK Biologicals, Novartis Vaccines and Sanofi Pasteur?[9]
- **Are you aware that former Chair of ATAGI Professor Terry Nolan has been involved in GlaxoSmithKline and Novartis-funded research on the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product via the Murdoch Children's Research Institute/VIRGo?**[10]
- **Are you aware that (former) ATAGI member Professor Helen Marshall is the lead investigator on a GlaxoSmithKline-funded Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine trial in South Australia[11] and led this industry-funded trial while she was a member of ATAGI?**[12]

- **Do you think it was ethical for Murdoch media/News Corp to fear monger about very rare invasive meningococcal B disease in its tabloid newspapers**, and to campaign relentlessly for the highly questionable and lucrative GlaxoSmithKline Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product to be added to the taxpayer-funded National Immunisation Program Schedule[13], **without disclosing its conflict of interest in being a corporate partner of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute which is involved in research on the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product?** (The Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product has previously been **rejected three times** by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee for the taxpayer-funded National Immunisation Program Schedule due to **"multiple uncertainties in relation to the clinical effectiveness of the vaccine against the disease..."** and other reasons.[14])
- **Do you think it was ethical for Murdoch media/News Corp to publish personal pleas to you Mr Morrison** for the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product to be added to the taxpayer-funded National Immunisation Program Schedule, e.g. **Dear Prime Minister Please Stop This Killer**, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 18 August 2019?
- **Are you aware that the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product is an aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine**, with up to three doses of this vaccine product being pressed upon children by GlaxoSmithKline[15], along with all the other aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine products and revaccinations on the National Immunisation Program Schedule? The evidence being cited by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) to defend the safety of aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine products in the Australian Government Department of Health Publication *Questions about vaccination*, is **self-admittedly based on data of low methodological quality**. [16] NCIRS Director Professor Kristine Macartney has so far failed to respond to my email on this matter, i.e. **Questionable claims for the safety of aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine products** (20 March 2019).

Mr Morrison, for your information, I have also forwarded correspondence relevant to this matter to Professor Andrew Wilson, Chair of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, i.e.:

- **Has Australia's vaccination policy been hijacked by the vaccine industry?** (27 November 2019)
- **Murdoch media's continuing campaign for the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product** (22 August 2019)
- **Challenging Murdoch influence on Australia's coercive vaccination policy - the example of meningococcal B vaccination** (13 August 2019)
- **Media blitz promoting meningococcal B vaccination for the taxpayer-funded schedule** (22 July 2019)
- **Questionable claims for the safety of aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine products** (17 April 2019)

**Mr Morrison, I would appreciate your early response to my questions, in the interests of transparency and accountability for Australia's taxpayer-funded coercive vaccination policy and No Jab, No Pay/Play laws.**

Sincerely

**Elizabeth Hart**

Independent citizen investigating conflicts of interest in vaccination policy and the over-use of vaccine products.

**References:** (Links current as at 19 December 2019.)

1. Anti-vaccination parents face \$15,000 welfare hit under 'No Jab' reforms, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 2015.
2. Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGo) - Murdoch Children's Research Institute: <https://www.mcri.edu.au/research/themes/infection-and-immunity/vaccine-and-immunisation-research-group-virgo>
3. How Murdoch Children's is leading vaccine research: <https://www.mcri.edu.au/virgo-video>
4. Scott Morrison will almost certainly lead the Liberals. The question is when? *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 2015: <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/scott-morrison-will-almost-certainly-lead-the-liberals-the-question-is-when-20150904-gjev8z.html>
5. See for example: Anti-vaccination parents face \$15,000 welfare hit under 'No Jab' reforms, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 2015.
6. Corporate Partners - Murdoch Children's Research Institute: <https://www.mcri.edu.au/corporate-partners>
7. Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGo) - Murdoch Children's Research Institute: <https://www.mcri.edu.au/research/themes/infection-and-immunity/vaccine-and-immunisation-research-group-virgo>
8. Our History - Murdoch Children's Research Institute: <https://www.mcri.edu.au/about/history>
9. Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGo) - Murdoch Children's Research Institute: <https://www.mcri.edu.au/research/themes/infection-and-immunity/vaccine-and-immunisation-research-group-virgo>
10. See for example: Antibody persistence and booster response in adolescents and young adults 4 and 7.5 years after immunization with 4CMenB vaccine. *Vaccine*. Vol. 37, Issue 9, 21 February 2019, Pages 1209-1218: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X19300283>
11. South Australia leads nation with Australian-first Meningococcal B study. The University of Adelaide Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, 10 February 2017: <https://health.adelaide.edu.au/news/2017/02/10/south-australia-leads-nation-with-australian-first-meningococcal-b-study> For information on 'competing interests' in regards to this

study see: B Part of It School Leaver protocol: an observational repeat cross-sectional study to assess the impact of a meningococcal serogroup B (4CMenB) vaccine programme on carriage of *Neisseria meningitidis*. *BMJ Open*. Vol. 9, Issue 5: <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/9/5/e027233>

12. Professor Helen Marshall is no longer listed as a member of ATAGI on the ATAGI website. However she remains listed on the ATAGI Conflict of Interest Disclosure statement last updated in 19 December 2018.

13. See for example: Meningococcal B vaccine must be urgently added to the National Immunisation Program, *RendezView/Courier Mail*, 19 July 2019; and Mums on mission to stop deadly meningococcal disease, *Courier Mail*, 20 July 2019; and New funding hope for vaccine against killer meningococcal disease, *Courier Mail*, 20 July 2019; and Parents of SA children between one and four years urged to take up meningococcal B vaccinations, *The Advertiser*, 29 September 2019; and Family pleas for support to get B vaccine on the free national schedule, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 2019...etc...

14. July 2015 PBAC meeting outcomes - subsequent decisions not to recommend.

15. Australian Production Information for Bexsero on the TGA website: <https://www.ebs.tga.gov.au/ebs/picmi/picmirepository.nsf/pdf?OpenAgent&id=CP-2013-PI-02131-1&d=201912181016933>

16. Jefferson T. et al. Adverse events after immunization with aluminium-containing DTP vaccines: a systematic review of the evidence. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* 2004;4:84-90. This review is cited in the Australian Government Department of Health publication *Questions about vaccination*, which is updated by researchers from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, particularly Dr Sally Ioannides, with support from Professor Kristine Macartney and Professor Peter McIntyre.