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CLARIFY COVID VACCINATION RIGHTS FOR NDIS PARTICIPANTS NOW!

Social Worker, Matilda Bawden, is calling on the Morrison Government to **immediately clarify & affirm** the rights of people with disabilities to refuse COVID vaccines & the right to quarantine themselves from service providers who have been vaccinated, after she became the subject of a media libel campaign for directly complying with the Department of Health (DoH) & National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Guidelines, giving participants “choice & control”. The ABC story also falsely alleged that a client was denied services, but the person who forwarded the email is not a client of Ms. Bawden’s at all.

Ms. Bawden urged the government to immediately clarify the confusion & distress created in the community by an ABC hit piece, falsely alleging that NDIS participants are at risk of being denied services, if they choose to decline the services of providers who may be contagious after being vaccinated.

‘If we really are all in this together, our elected official’s better help us get clarity about vaccine policy immediately before lobbyists with conflicts of interest, rogue bureaucrats & journalists chasing scandals get to make official government policy on-the-fly; against the Code of Conduct & to the detriment of NDIS participants’ Ms. Bawden said.

‘Whose voice reigns supreme now? Does a bureaucrat have a final say? Or a journalist looking to generate click bait?’ Ms. Bawden asked. ‘Service providers in the industry need certainty & peace of mind; not confusion & the “heads we win; tails you lose”, double-jeopardy created when one agency sends conflicting & opposing information & disinformation to NDIS participants & their support staff.’

The ABC labelled Ms. Bawden & her disabled clients as “anti-vaxxer, conspiracy theorists”, after being criticized by the Immunisation Coalition Chairman, Mr. Rodney Pearce, for fully complying with official government guidelines, as posted on both the NDIS & Department of Health (DoH) websites. Ms Bawden also referred to a radio interview in which Pearce states that pathogenic transmission is still possible & that the question of liability is unclear; potentially making NDIS Service Providers liable if participants are vaccine-injured.

‘Who is the final voice on this matter?’ Ms. Bawden asked. ‘Our political leaders need to reaffirm the human rights of NDIS participants after they or their support staff have been vaccinated,’ Ms. Bawden said ‘because my instruction to clients & staff followed a very specific request by a client not to have vaccinated workers come to her home as she is herself immune-compromised & suffering from Liver Disease. My client has had many lengthy stays in ICU’s over the past year & she is terrified of catching anything or exposing herself to anything that may further delay her treatments, which were already set back a whole year due to lockdowns & alleged “hot spots”. That doesn’t make her a “conspiracy theory nutter” as Pearce would label her; that makes her vulnerable, confused, cautious & afraid!’ Ms. Bawden points out that many other disability groups are issuing warnings to participants about vaccines risks with consideration of their specific conditions, including people with epilepsy, allergies & skeletal dysplasia.

Whilst Pearce claimed the email was based “obviously on a false premise - that having a vaccine was putting them or a client at risk”, Pearce was clearly gaslighting when speaking against official government warnings advising that all people, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, adopt standard COVID-safe practices, including quarantine.

Pearce called information contained on the DoH website warning that vaccinated persons could still pass on pathogens as “fake news”. Whilst the ABC & Immunisation Coalition wrongfully claimed there was ‘no risk’ of spreading any contagion, Ms. Bawden points to the DoH page which makes clear that vaccinated persons should still exercise precautions to avoid transmission of any infections as they may still be contagious:

You can choose if you want to get vaccinated for COVID-19

Vaccinations in Australia are voluntary, including the COVID-19 vaccine. All Australians must give [informed consent](#) before having the COVID-19 vaccine. To be vaccinated, you will need to provide your informed consent to the person giving you the vaccination &, in some cases, your disability provider.

People with disability, their families, carers & substitute decision-makers can discuss the risks & benefits of the vaccine with their GP or other health professionals. You can also discuss whether it is appropriate to receive the vaccine. This may assist in ensuring consent to have the vaccine is informed. Final consent is the decision of the person with disability &/or the person who supports them to make decisions. The Department of Health has developed a [Consent Form](#). An [Easy Read version](#) about giving your consent for COVID-19 vaccination is also available.

COVID-19 transmission after vaccination

Clinical trials have shown that the Pfizer, AstraZeneca & Novavax vaccines protect against COVID-19 symptoms & severe disease after a person receives two doses. We don't have enough information to understand the long-term protection against COVID-19 after vaccination at this stage, including for people with disability. **We also don't have enough information from research to understand whether people who have been vaccinated can pass the virus onto others.**

The TGA will continue to monitor the ongoing research to understand how the vaccines work over time. This is why it's important for you to continue practicing good hygiene, physical distancing & other COVIDSafe recommendations, **even if you have been vaccinated.**

Getting support if you choose not to be vaccinated against COVID-19

COVID-19 **vaccines are voluntary & you can decide whether you want to be vaccinated or not.** If a disability service provider or support worker **refuses to continue providing supports to you because you decided not to get the COVID-19 vaccine, it could be a breach of the NDIS Code of Conduct (NDIS Providers).** In this case, a complaint can be made to the NDIS Commission.

The Department of Health has a series of videos with health professionals which may answer questions about the COVID-19 vaccine from a medical perspective. **This includes information about wearing face masks after being vaccinated, how the vaccines are administered, & the impact of the vaccine with other medications.**

[see: <https://&.health.gov.au/initiatives-&-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/information-for-people-with-disability-about-covid-19-vaccines>]

This page makes clear that discriminating against a non-vaccinated person may be a breach of Code of Conduct, but now it seems that respecting the clients' request for caution & quarantine can also see a Service Provider **raked over hot coals for actually complying** with NDIS policy designed to uphold the rights of participants who choose not to be exposed to transmission risks.

'When an NDIS Commission spokesperson places a service provider under investigation for actually complying with official guidelines, to now imply a purported breach of Code of Conduct to effectively overturn the vaccine rights of NDIS participants, it creates a dangerous & confusing precedent for service providers & clients alike,' Ms. Bawden said, 'We are "damned if we do, damned if we don't", but worse still, it undermines the very rights of NDIS participants & demeans their value & place in society as second-class citizens" .

Ms. Bawden is calling on the Prime Minister, Dept of Health & NDIS Ministers to get their heads together before people with disabilities find themselves under coercion & compulsion to take risks against their own prerogative to informed consent & "choice & control" .

Matilda Bawden is available for comment at matildabawden@gmail.com or on Mob: 0412 836 685, anytime.