Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

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Ms Elizabeth Hart
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Dear Ms Hart

Further to my letter to you of 20 May 2014, I writing with additional advice in relation to the matters you raised with the Chair of the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC), Professor Ian Olver and Professor Anderson, CEO National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). I am responding on behalf of Professors Olver and Anderson.

With regard to the matters you raised relating to the need for the second dose of the MMR vaccination as part of the Australian Government's National Immunisation Program (NIP) and the link between this second dose and eligibility for obtaining immunisation related payments for parents, I confirm that NHMRC approved the most recent version of the Immunisation Handbook developed by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) which provides evidence based guidelines for the administration of vaccines. ATAGI's recommendations are based on the best scientific evidence available from both published and unpublished literature. As you are aware, the vaccination program follows the recommendations in this handbook. I am aware that the Chair of ATAGI has written to you previously regarding this matter and explained the necessary requirement for the two doses of measles containing vaccine.

With regard to the issues you raised about the informed consent process for participation in the immunisation program, the information provided to parents is based on the most available evidence reflected in the immunisation handbook. As you are aware, immunisation in Australia is not compulsory and provisions exist to enable parents to apply for an exemption to immunisation requirements in order to retain their eligibility for the Family Tax Benefit Part A Supplement.

I am pleased to confirm, that in line with the requirements of the NHMRC's policy on declaration and conflicts of interests, the declared interests of all AHEC members are now available on the NHMRC website, along with their category of appointment and this can be viewed at the following link: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/committees-nhmrc/australian-health-ethics-committee-ahec

Yours sincerely

Samantha Robertson
Executive Director
Research Translation Group

22 July 2014