

AUSTRALIAN VACCINATION NETWORK  
CODE OF ETHICS  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Preface:**

The Australian Vaccination Network (AVN) provides for a Code of Ethics to be prepared by the Committee. In 1998, a Code of Ethics was formulated. It was clear that a national association requires a united code of conduct which is binding on all its office bearers.

The Code of Ethics has been crafted from the experience of Members and Office Bearers of the Association. Inevitably, from time to time, revisions will be necessary as new 'conduct situations' arise, as they almost always will in the future. Much of the success of the AVN can be traced back to the principles contained in the Code.

The Code is binding on all AVN Office Bearers and such Members of the Committee and such Subcommittees as may be formed from time to time as the need arises.

The elected office bearers are those named within the AVN's constitution; non office bearers are general committee members and those on subcommittees formed by the AVN Management Committee.

The Code of Ethics determines the manner in which the office bearer conducts herself/himself whilst performing those functions.

The principle objectives for which the Association is established are:

1. To encourage all families to be fully informed with regards to medical procedures in general - vaccination specifically - enabling the to make educated decisions.
2. Making available the experience of families (with their permission) and the results of research to Members of the Association and to other interested persons and associations.
3. To assist in public relations and community education.
4. Liaising and exchanging information with interested individuals and associations within Australia and overseas.
5. Collection, publication and dissemination of information, and the provision of resource facilities.
6. Encouraging research and liaising with researchers in Australia and overseas.
7. Encouraging State and Federal Governments to record the necessary vaccination information so true records can be accessed for research purposes. These records include:
  - (1) Monitoring the vaccination status of those contracting 'vaccine preventable' diseases.
  - (2) Compulsory reporting, recording and investigation of possible vaccine reactions.
  - (3) Mandatory recording of all lot and batch numbers of vaccines to enable the tracking of possible 'hot lots'
  - (4) Maintenance of a national toll-free number for parents and health professionals to report suspected adverse vaccine and drug reactions. These reactions are to be investigated by an independent panel which includes consumer representatives as the primary stakeholders.

- (5) Independent testing of both vaccine safety and effectiveness using placebo controlled studies which are funded by the government and are completely free of drug company influence.
- (6) A new government committee to be set up to review all new vaccine licenses; this committee to include stakeholders from consumer groups such as the AVN.
- (7) New legislation to be introduced in every State of Australia to guarantee that no child or adult can be discriminated against as a result of their vaccination status and that no school, preschool, childcare centre or employer can require vaccination for any reason.
8. To develop the AVN Management Committee to bring groups together, sharing ideas, spreading the workload and networking information.
9. Publicising the AVN as widely as possible in local areas; giving parents the opportunity to have access to unbiased information.
10. Challenging media articles that give misleading information to the public.
11. Dealing with any and all threats to the AVN's ability to protect and inform the Australian public.

### **Obligations to the Management Committee:**

1. Committee meetings are held at a frequency and time set by the Committee Members and the AVN Constitution. It is essential that all members of the Management Committee attend these meetings though it is understandable if, for reasons of sickness or prior commitments, a Committee Member may need to miss an occasional meeting. If this is the case, it is the responsibility of the member to inform the Secretary of their absence in advance so their apologies can be added to the minutes.
2. No Committee Member may miss more than 2 meetings in any 6-month period without the prior approval of the Committee. Such absence can lead to the Committee Member's expulsion from the Committee.
3. The Committee maintains an email discussion list. All Committee Members are required to access this list at least every 2-3 days and to respond to messages in which their input is requested within a reasonable amount of time. It is essential, for the most efficient running of the AVN, that Committee input is frequent and timely.
4. Office Bearers of the Committee are required to prepare a report which will be presented prior to each meeting. These include the following:
  - (1) President
  - (2) Vice President (should the AVN have a Vice President at the time)
  - (3) Secretary
  - (4) Treasurer
5. Any other Management Committee Member can, should they wish, table a report to be presented at a Committee meeting.
6. All Office Holders must be aware of their responsibilities in relation to various government departments that the AVN must report to. For example, the Treasurer must send copies of our financial reports to the Dept of Fair Trading within 1 month of our AGM; the Secretary must schedule an AGM within 6 months of the end of our financial year, etc. It is best that Committee Members liaise closely with the AVN's Office Manager in relation to these requirements.
7. It is the President's role to lead Committee meetings and ensure that all necessary rules of voting are followed. Should the President not be available, the Vice President or another Office Bearer will fill this role.

8. The Secretary is responsible for preparing both a Committee Agenda and the Minutes of each meeting to be held and to email this information to all Committee Members via the Committee email list and for informing the Dept of Fair Trading of any changes to the committee promptly.

9. The Treasurer will liaise with the AVN office staff and request any and all information they require prior to the date of any Committee meeting at which they will be presenting a report.

### **Committee Members and the Public:**

10. Know and comply with your duties and obligations as provided by the Constitution and as laid down by the Committee and uphold the objects as laid down in aims and objectives.

11. Carry out those duties and obligations loyally, in a voluntary capacity and in a spirit of cooperation with the Association as a whole. When holding a position of responsibility, ensure that each person working with you feels a useful and necessary part of the Association.

12. You are responsible for the safekeeping and proper use of confidential and copyright material, eg. database details, committee discussions and anything else which is so classified to remain confidential.

13. AVN support is free to AVN members. In cases where payment is given for services rendered (such as a seminar), such payment is the property of the Association.

14. The AVN makes available publications and other goods for resale or hire on the basis that no Member makes a personal profit from that resale or hire and that;

(1) rates for resale are set by the Committee from time to time; and

(2) basic hiring rates as listed on the catalogue are set by the Committee from time to time.

15. All Committee and Subcommittee members are legally responsible for money belonging to the Association which is entrusted to them and of ensuring that proper financial records are kept.

16. Any persons or associations other than the AVN, without the permission of the Committee, shall use no AVN meeting or mailing list to promote the sale of goods or services. Do not allow any AVN meeting, nor any other aspect of the AVN to be used for the sale of goods or services for commercial or individual gain other than by the AVN without permission of the Committee. AVN Fundraising may use commercially produced products.

17. Do not allow any AVN meeting to be used for the promotion of political, sectarian or racial views or for such views to be expressed in any AVN written material or when representing the Association in public.

18. Unless specific other arrangements are made by the Committee, copyright in any material dealing in whole or in part which is written or otherwise recorded by an office bearer or representative on behalf of or for the use of the Association, during or after her/his term of office, is and remains the property of the AVN and is also subject to normal copyright laws.

19. In the case of a Member or Members writing a significant publication such as a book for publication by the AVN, the Committee may, in its absolute discretion, determine whether a royalty should be paid to the Member or Members and the appropriate rate.

20. When giving an interview, speaking in public or at a private meeting in your capacity as a representative of the AVN, or writing materials for publication in which your personal opinion is expressed on matters related to vaccination or any other aspect of vaccination, state clearly that your opinions are not necessarily the opinions of the Association.

21. Your personal conduct and appearance inevitably reflect on the Association and the respect in which it is held. Do nothing which will bring the Association into disrepute.
22. You may not hold an appointment with any association, institution or commercial enterprise which has been declared by the Committee to be inimical to the AVN.
23. A product which has been presented to the AVN to sell through its administration must receive the Association's approval by the Committee. If the product breaches the Code of Ethics or Procedure and Policy Manual, the Association will not offer assistance to the sale of said product. The owner will be informed in writing of the Committee's decision.

### **You and the family:**

1. A personal and friendly approach is the very essence of the AVN. Remember this whether you are dealing with Members or non-Members seeking help.
2. Ensure that each Member feels herself/himself to be a useful and necessary part of the Association.
3. Remember we cannot tell the parent to vaccinate or not to vaccinate their children or themselves.
4. Do not allow your attitudes on this subject to influence your dealings with any parent and support them in their decision - whatever that decision may be.
5. Do not give medical advice. Any parents needing medical advice are to be encouraged to see a competent health professional.
6. Names, addresses and personal information relating to a family who has received information is strictly confidential and are not to be given to any third party save with the consent of that family or, in exceptional circumstances, with the consent of the Management Committee.

### **You and the Community:**

7. Encourage doctors, hospitals, infant welfare sisters and all other health practitioners to research the vaccination issue and to become members of the AVN. It is very important to establish and maintain friendly relationships and to encourage the exchange of knowledge.
8. Foster a positive and constructive approach towards establishments which, directly or indirectly, do or do not encourage vaccination. Realise that tact and understanding are far more likely to eventually achieve the appropriate attitudes and conditions than a negative or critical approach.

AGREEMENT TO ABIDE BY THE CODE OF ETHICS

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have carefully read the

AVN's code of ethics and do agree to abide by its rules now and for the entire term of my

tenure as a Member or Office Holder of the AVN Management Committee.

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

DATED \_\_\_\_\_