

# Appendix 7



# **SPECTRUM LABOR**

**SUBMISSION**

to

**THE  
INQUIRY  
INTO  
ANTI-VILIFICATION  
PROTECTIONS**

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**Dr. Nicole Baldwin**  
@DrNicoleBaldwin

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**Dr. Nicole Baldwin**

January 17 at 11:03 PM · 🌐

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options

ICYMI...Over the past 5 days I have been the subject of a large, coordinated global attack from the antivaxx community both online and offline due to a provaccine video that I created on Tik Tok and shared across my social media platforms.

It has taken a team working around the clock to ban over 5000 attackers from my Facebook page alone. Fraudulent reviews have been posted on multiple rating sites, most notably Google and Yelp. All reviews have been reported and are under investigation.

Photos of mine have been altered with antivaxx propaganda and shared across all social platforms. These too have been reported.

Attackers have been calling my office and harassing my staff as well as threatening my practice. These calls are under investigation by the police.

What can YOU do to help:

👉 Continue to spread the word - VACCINES ARE SAFE. VACCINES ARE EFFECTIVE. VACCINES DO NOT CAUSE AUTISM.

👉 If you see harassing comments on any of my social media platforms, please report those and send me screen shots of any threats.

👉 If you see fraudulent reviews online, please report those as well.

👉 If you see photos of me that have been altered, please screenshot, send it to me and report the user.

👉 If you would like to join the fight against antivaxx attacks such as this, check out [www.ShotsHeard.com](http://www.ShotsHeard.com) to join a team that combats these attacks.

Thankyou to my office staff, my online team, and my amazing online

## INTRODUCTION

Spectrum Labor is a national group of Autistic ALP members. We give the Autistic community a voice in the political process and we are committed to the promotion, support and protection of the Autistic Community across Australia. We assert that Autism is genetic in origin and a different way of being. We reject the notion of a cure and believe that people on the Spectrum have a great deal to offer society.

Both Autistic animal scientist Dr Temple Grandin and Professor Tony Attwood, two of the world's most renowned experts on Autism, are adamant that Autistic genes have been crucial to human advancement through science and innovation. We point to historical figures such as Albert Einstein and Amadeus Mozart, who would today be seen to have Autistic attributes, as well as Autistic climate strike leader Greta Thunberg and former Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals Leader Tim Fischer, all of whom have made their mark on the world, not in spite of their Autism but because of it. In an interview with ABC Radio, after stepping down from politics in 1999 to help care for his Autistic son, Tim Fischer claimed that the obsessive nature which helped him to scale the political heights was a sure sign of his own undiagnosed Autism.

Spectrum Labor consists of a growing number of ALP members on the Autism Spectrum. Autistics are known to have a strong social conscience and contribute greatly to political and community life. As there is still a great deal of confusion and stigma surrounding the Autism Spectrum, we expect our organisation to continue growing as more adults undergo diagnosis and find the strength to share their diagnoses and become vocal about the issues that affect them. We are a multicultural group and currently have members from several states, including both men and women of all ages, people with experience teaching, counselling and bringing up children on the Spectrum. Our members either work or are looking for work, study or have additional issues that make it difficult to pursue careers.

Community misunderstandings and lack of appropriate accommodations and services are preventing many Autistics from developing their talents, contributing fully to communities and workplaces and enjoying quality of life. Central to these misunderstandings is the continuing obfuscation and vilification of Autism in the mass media, social media and the places where we work (or seek work), study and spend our spare time.

Spectrum Labor welcomes the Victorian State Government's Inquiry into anti-Vilification Protections. We as Autistics utterly abhor discrimination and vilification in all its forms - firstly, because Autistics tend not to judge others based on outer differences such as skin colour, age or socioeconomic status and secondly, because we experience misunderstandings, bullying and misrepresentations ourselves as Autistics and we understand the pain and inequality that vilification causes.

Founded in October 2017, Spectrum Labor has produced numerous statements condemning individuals who vilify the Autistic Community or Autistic individuals or who otherwise cynically sensationalise and misrepresent Autism. We have also spoken out in defence of Autistic climate strike leader Greta Thunberg and condemned the sexist and anti-Autistic hate speech being directed towards her by conservative climate change deniers.

We have made policy submissions to the ALP National Policy Forum, the Victorian Mental Health inquiry, the Federal Autism Inquiry and the Religious Discrimination Bills consultation process. Spectrum Labor ran a market stall and fringe event at the last Victorian ALP State Conference, featuring speeches about ***The History of Autism*** and ***Migrants on the Autism Spectrum***. We have a Spectrum Labor facebook page as well as a private group and we also have a website [spectrumlabor.home.blog](http://spectrumlabor.home.blog)

Spectrum Labor's major upcoming activity for 2020 is to launch and promote a national online petition calling for an inquiry into anti-Autistic hate speech. This petition will draw Federal Parliament's attention to the hate and contempt, both in real life and on social media, towards those on the Autism Spectrum, such as referring to Autism as a burden, a disease to be cured, brain damage and not genetic in its basis - including beliefs in causation such as environmental DNA damage, electromagnetics and most commonly vaccines. There is also the false claim that Autistics tend to be more violent than the neurotypical population. These claims are made as though they are factual when they are not and cause

harm in the community similar to that of racial and religious vilification. Our petition will recommend a Human Rights Commission Inquiry into the serious social effects of fear-based hate and contempt towards those on the Autism Spectrum, in real life and on social media, with the aim of eliminating such conduct.

In this submission to the Victorian State Government's Inquiry into anti-Vilification Protections, Spectrum Labor will address Terms of Reference Point 8:

**8) Possible extension of protections or expansion of protection to classes of people not currently protected under the existing Act (ie Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001)**

We note with dismay that Australia is one of the worst performers in the OECD for disability employment. A study commissioned by Autism peak body Amaze, released in March 2019, found that the unemployment rate for Autistic people was 31.6%, which was three times the rate of people with disability and almost six times the rate of people without disability. There are similarly worrying statistics about the incidence of mental health issues amongst those on the Autism Spectrum. We believe that anti-Autistic hate speech contributes greatly to these issues and there is an urgent need to extend the Act's anti-vilification provisions to Autistics and our family members.

**SPECTRUM LABOR'S RESPONSE TO MEDIA VILIFICATION**

Spectrum Labor was co-founded by ALP members Helen Said and Philip Gluyas who met online through ALP National Policy Forum discussions. Since its formation in October 2017, Spectrum Labor has been regularly countering misrepresentations of Autism and vilification of Autistic individuals.

A month after it was formed, Spectrum Labor released a statement condemning Nationals Senator Barry O'Sullivan's remark that the banks have shown an "almost autistic disregard" for the law. The comment totally misrepresented Autistic traits – while Autistics struggle with *cognitive empathy*, recognising hints or facial expressions that an individual is in need or troubled, we are well known to have very high levels of *affective empathy* ie desire to help those who we know are in need. Furthermore, scrupulous honesty and difficulty telling lies, a hallmark of Autism, is the polar opposite of the conduct of our banks. Spectrum Labor members felt particularly maligned as we are loyal ALP members who supported the Banking Royal Commission. And support its findings.

Quoting from an ABC News post on November 27 2017 about Senator O'Sullivan's remarks: ***The comments are hurtful to people with autism and the senator should apologise said Dr Graeme Innes, the Australian Human Rights Commission's former disability discrimination commissioner.***

***"I was appalled by that comment and I think that the senator owes an apology to people with autism throughout Australia," Dr Innes told ABC's The World Today.***



***"I've spoke to a number of people in the autism community who are deeply hurt by the use of that language.***

***"The old saying that sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me is just not true.***

***"All the research shows that and people are already disadvantaged are hurt and damaged but such inappropriate use of handicappist language."***

Spectrum Labor applauds Dr Innes defence of the Autistic community and asks this Inquiry to act upon the former Disability Discrimination Commissioner's opinions about the damage done by what he describes as "handicappist language", by extending anti-vilification protections to people on the Autism Spectrum.

The following month, in December 2017, we condemned former gardening celebrity Don Burke for offering up "Aspergers", which he described as his "genetic failing", as an excuse for his long record of unpleasant behaviour and sexual harassment and assault, when he doesn't even have an Aspergers diagnosis. Burke denied his impropriety and assaults on women but, suspecting he would be disbelieved and fearing prosecution, he led the public to believe that if he was guilty, he should be let off the hook because he couldn't help himself - it was undiagnosed "Aspergers" that supposedly made him do it.

Spectrum Labor rightly condemned Don Burke's depiction of Autism as a genetic failing that could render a man incapable of controlling his foul language, workplace and sexual conduct. Burke's depiction of his supposed "Aspergers" is a misrepresentation and slur on all Autistic men and falsely brings their integrity into disrepute. This has wide ranging consequences for the employability and relationship potential of men on the Autism Spectrum, one of many media misrepresentations which we hope this Inquiry seeks to address. The issue of random self identification is a hold back in the credibility of the Autism diagnosis.

In May 2018, Spectrum Labor further condemned the actions of a group of thugs, armed with spanners, who attacked an Autistic boy outside Northcote High School. Spectrum Labor labelled this an anti-Autistic hate crime, not just an assault. We called upon the State Government to lead community education on Autism, as well as anti-bullying initiatives, and to legally recognise hate crimes committed against Autistics in the same way that race hate crimes and homophobic hate crimes are recognised. We believe that anti-Autistic hate speech in the media and on social media is fuelling these hate crimes.

Also in 2018, we condemned a September 11 article in the Australian National Review which repeated bogus claims linking vaccines with Autism. Aside from the threats to public health posed by the anti-vaccination lobby, the false Autism-vaccines link depicts Autism as a form of brain damage. This is completely untrue and it is a slur upon Autistics who are quite proud of our inherited inborn differences. This slur leads people to pity and fear Autism, causing marginalisation and ultimately more hate and vilification.

Three months later, in December 2018, Spectrum Labor again tackled anti-Autism hate speech in condemning remarks made to the Sunday Times in Perth on December 16 by Professor Jeremy Nicholson, head of the Australian National Phenome Centre at the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, in which Professor Nicholson described Autism as “a silently growing monster” and “the most expensive disease in the Western world.” This we considered to be a clear case of hate speech.

Spectrum Labor described Professor Nicholson’s comments as offensive and irresponsible, and lamented, “No thought has been given to the fact that children are growing up, knowing they are on the Autism Spectrum, and they are hearing our most trusted medical experts likening them to a monster and a disease.” We suggested the professor should wash his mouth out with soap for using such language. We also raised civil liberty concerns about Professor Nicholson’s ambition “to phenotype and genotype every person in WA”.

The emergence of teenage climate strike leader Greta Thunberg caused further anti-Autistic vilification worldwide. In August 2019, Spectrum Labor lashed out at Andrew Bolt’s depiction of Thunberg as being “deeply disturbed” due to her Autism and in fact we asserted that Autism contributes to political insights, strong leadership and innovative thinking. Spectrum Labor co-founder Philip Gluyas called on Sky News to review Bolt’s employment.

In October 2019, we again defended Greta Thunberg from an Australian anti-Autistic climate change denier, this time Coffs Harbour Christian Community School Principal Rodney Lynn, who penned a school newsletter dismissing Thunberg as “a little girl with ... mental problems” who promotes “doomsday waffle talk”.

Mr Lynn urged people not to listen to her, saying she was a "little girl with self declared various emotional and mental problems that she thinks give her a special insight into a pending doom".

"My life experience has taught me that the doomsday predictors are just attention getters," he said in his September 26 newsletter. Two months later, Coffs Harbour was surrounded by unprecedented bushfires which, at the time of writing, have not yet subsided. Mr Lynn has not responded to Spectrum Labor’s offer of a free lesson in climate science.

Our latest press statement, made in December 2019, concerns a predicted tsunami of misrepresentations of Autism that we expect would follow the passage of the Federal government's Religious Discrimination Bills. Spectrum Labor has warned that, under these laws, Autistics will be depicted as demon possessed, sinful, a punishment for their parents’ sins, in need of a miraculous cure and that Autistic women who choose to live apart from their partners will be labelled as immoral. We are especially concerned about vilification of Autistics who are also part of the LGBTIQ community. These vilifications will be given legal cover providing they are part of the perpetrator’s religious belief system.

Autism advocates want to advance the rights and life outcomes of Autistics but instead we are spending our time countering vilifications and misrepresentations which hurt Autistics

and whittle away at our rights, self esteem and social standing and expose us to horrific hate crimes and other violations. We need anti-vilification protections to help us overcome misunderstandings and realise our full potential.

#### VILIFICATION ALLOWS TOXIC "EXPERTS" TO MISREPRESENT US

Because of communication issues, many Autistic advocates have only had the opportunity to organise for their interests, as a community, since the advent of the internet. Previously, experts, parents and charities were the main voices heard. Unfortunately, one of these charities, Autism Speaks, does not represent the best interests of the Autistic community. Over the years they have produced totally unacceptable videos that portray children with autism as something to fear, in order to propel their organisation into the limelight and panic people into donating huge sums of money.

One of their videos is a commercial called "I Am Autism" which has since been removed from the internet following an outcry from Autistic self-advocates. Like a horror movie, it included lines like "I know where you live" and "If you're happily married, I will make sure that your marriage fails" and "You are scared, and you should be".

Autism Speaks also made a movie called "Autism Every Day" where mothers talked about how difficult their lives were because of their children with Autism, and showed parents openly making these comments while their children were in the room. One mother said, in the presence of her child, that she contemplated driving off a bridge with her Autistic child, but decided not to because she also had a non-Autistic child to look after. Could there be a more irresponsible and vilifying ad than one which claims Autistic children cause family murder-suicides?

Spectrum Labor and other self-advocates utterly condemn these fearful depictions of Autistic children as hate speech which demonises and marginalises our Spectrum. We further point to Autism Speaks' questionable search for a cure, for pre-natal screening programs, the fact that only 4% of their funds go into supporting Autistics in their everyday lives and the fact that no Autistic persons are involved in running their organisation. Yet this organisation, which actively researches ways to prevent people like Einstein from being born, holds enormous sway with governments including the United States.

Autism Speaks created the "Light it up blue for Autism Awareness" campaign, and chose blue to depict boys on the Spectrum, in denial of the existence of Autistic girls. The first use of the Autism Puzzle Piece was in 1963. Gerald Gasson, a parent and board member for the National Autistic Society in London created a logo for the organisation that consisted of a puzzle piece along with the image of a crying child. It is unfair that Autistics today are saddled with these childlike depictions as internationally recognised Autism symbols, which both cause and are caused by media misrepresentations of Autism as a puzzling, tragic, boyish condition.

Unfortunately within the Autistic community there are malcontents who have adopted this vilification as somehow acceptable and seek actions by government to rid the world of the



Autistic community. Californian Autistic Jonathan Mitchell has long advocated for a cure, even taking to Newsweek to express his views. He was roundly condemned by a number of people as reported by Newsweek, and this did include Spectrum Labor co-founder Philip Gluyas. Mitchell's blog contains the catch cry "We don't need no stinkin' neurodiversity".

Michigan based Yuval Levental has been questioning all that the Autism Rights movement represents, preferring also to present Autism in a negative light – to the extent of trying to get Philip Gluyas' website taken down for simply presenting the positive view while criticising the likes on Mitchell and others. Levental most recently attacked the well respected author of the best selling book *Neurotribes*, Steve Silberman, on the website Spiked Online.

British Autistic Thomas Clements, the author of *The Autistic Buddha*, has also been active in this negative manner, using The Guardian to attack the wide range of diagnosis of the Autistic Spectrum consequent to the introduction of the DSM-5 in 2013. All three of these people insist that society is right and Autism is a bad thing that needs to be eliminated. This is not the case at all.

Self-advocates call for Autism Acceptance rather than Awareness, which, through media vilification, has become synonymous with "bewareness". Autistic self-advocates prefer to symbolise Autism with the colour gold which has the chemical symbol Au. Gold is also seen as bright, whereas blue can also be seen as a sad colour. Unfortunately, as long as Autistics are overwhelmingly depicted as extremely disturbed children, the public will be less prepared to hear our voices and will expect these self-interested charities to continue speaking on our behalf.

#### VILIFICATION ENCOURAGES ABUSIVE THERAPIES

The prolonged and hysterical vilification of Autistics has given rise to a clamour for cures and intensive therapies, some so intensive that very young children are forced to endure behaviour modification programs for up to 40 hours a week. There is no doubt that most Autistic children will benefit from early intervention therapies, however Applied Behaviour Analysis has drawn criticism from Autistic self-advocates, who consider traditional ABA to be a form of child abuse. Spectrum Labor is concerned that anti-Autistic vilification in the media has prompted many well-meaning parents and therapists to mistakenly opt for the more coercive and suppressive therapies, in an effort to stop children "looking Autistic", at the expense of developing the Autistic child's communication skills and special interests.

Ari Ne'eman, co-founder of the US Autistic Self Advocacy Network, objects to ABA on the grounds that it focuses on making autistic people appear to be "indistinguishable from their peers" — an expression he draws from Dr Lovaas, who pioneered these strategies. As such, Ne'eman argues, it discourages behaviours without acknowledging their emotional content.

"The emphasis on things like eye contact or sitting still or not stimming" — i.e. self-stimulation such as flapping hands — "is oriented around trying to create the trappings of the typical child," he says, "without acknowledging the reality that different children have

different needs. It can be actively harmful when we teach people from a very early age that the way they act, the way they move is fundamentally wrong.”

Ne’eman acknowledges that self-injurious behaviour — one of the things ABA is designed to reduce — is a serious problem. But he argues that other structured interventions that are aimed at speech and language may be more valuable to the child, especially children who are nonverbal, for whom the behaviour is a form of communication.

By changing the narrative on Autism, and by accepting Autism as a different way of being, early interventions will become more about getting the best out of each child rather than suppressing atypical behaviours. Extending anti-vilification protections to Autistics is fundamental to recognising Autistics’ value to society and fostering non-abusive early intervention strategies which allow Autistic children to express their uniqueness and differences.

An even more alarming Autism “cure” being pedalled by former Scientologist Jim Humble, now a Reverend of the Genesis II Church, is “Miracle Mineral Supplement”, which is nothing more than toxic industrial bleach. MMS causes nausea, vomiting and the shedding of the intestinal lining through the faeces, in long “rope worms,” which he and others claimed, in the book “Healing the Symptoms known as Autism” were in fact “autism worms.” The authors claim to have “cured” hundreds of children of Autism with this harmful product. A major petitioning campaign succeeded in having this book removed from Amazon, however it is still available elsewhere on the internet. MMS is banned for therapeutic use in Australia and many other countries.

Spectrum Labor sees a direct link between the outrageously negative depictions of Autism in the mass media and some parents’ desperation to feed their children these toxic products, in the hope they will defecate away non-existent “Autism worms”. Anti-Autistic vilification has created the panic and fear that has driven well-intentioned parents to poison their children. Feeding MMS to children should be punishable by law as child abuse and all MMS propaganda should be banned from the internet and all social media platforms.

#### VILIFICATION CONTRIBUTES TO BULLYING, HATE CRIMES AND FILICIDE

Sadly in Australia we are beginning to uncover the extent of the bullying and abuse perpetrated against people with disability in institutional settings, schools, workplaces and in their homes. Lack of funding and services, including respite services, are making Autistics with high care needs more vulnerable to abuse, including serious assault. Sensationalised and distorted media depictions of Autistics, at the expense of anti-bullying and pro-diversity messages, have contributed to the devaluing of Autistics’ lives. Assaults, bullying and social exclusion are almost everyday occurrences for many people on the Autism Spectrum. We refer again to the incident outside Northcote High School in May 2018, discussed earlier.

In some extreme cases, parents murder their Autistic children. The US Autistic Self Advocacy Network states: ***In the past five years, over 600 people with disabilities have been murdered by their parents.***

**Every year on March 1st, the disability community gathers across the nation to remember disabled victims of filicide-disabled people murdered by their family members or caregivers.**

**We see the same pattern repeating over and over again. A parent kills their disabled child. The media portrays these murders as justifiable and inevitable due to the "burden" of having a disabled person in the family. If the parent stands trial, they are given sympathy and comparatively lighter sentences, if they are sentenced at all. The victims are disregarded, blamed for their own murder at the hands of the person they should have been able to trust the most, and ultimately forgotten. And then the cycle repeats.**

#### VILIFICATION LEADS TO POOR EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Media vilification of Autistics leads people to focus on Autistics' problems rather than abilities. This negatively influences schools and employers to reject Autistics as students and employees. Parents report they are sometimes told by mainstream school principals that their children would be better catered for at special schools, even though parents want their children to be mainstreamed and have the right to do so.

At schools, Autistic students with additional learning needs often receive assistance from Integration Aides, who, being overwhelmingly female, are exploited as unqualified workers on low pay and short term contracts. This does not give Autistic students the stability that they need or the best quality support. Media misrepresentations of Autistic kids as being minded and controlled at school, rather than educated for careers, has contributed to this state of affairs and ultimately leads to unacceptably high levels of unemployment amongst the Autism community, as described earlier.

The June 2017 remarks made by Senator Pauline Hanson were roundly condemned as being bigoted and hurtful to Autistic students and their families. These remarks damaged the respect and acceptance afforded to Autistic children right across Australia. It is remarks like these that should be called into question by anti-vilification laws. While some Autistic students need extra help, others are ahead of their peers educationally and many children who need extra help are non-Autistics with other learning issues. However Pauline Hanson isn't known for letting the facts ruin a good scapegoating campaign. Hanson was quoted in ABC News as saying:

**"These kids have a right to an education, by all means, but, if there are a number of them, these children should go into a special classroom and be looked after and given that special attention," she said.**

**"Most of the time the teacher spends so much time on them they forget about the child who is straining at the bit and wants to go ahead in leaps and bounds in their education.**

**"That child is held back by those others, because the teachers spend time with them.**

**"I am not denying them. If it were one of my children I would love all the time given to them to give them those opportunities. But it is about the loss for our other kids.**

**"I think that we have more autistic children, yet we are not providing the special classrooms or the schools for these autistic children.**

**"It is no good saying that we have to allow these kids to feel good about themselves and that we do not want to upset them and make them feel hurt.**

**"I understand that, but we have to be realistic at times and consider the impact this is having on other children in the classroom."....**

**...Labor MP Emma Husar, who has a 10-year-old son with autism, said Senator Hanson's comments "call on people to be divided and to segregate those people who are different".**

**"She owes an apology to every single autistic child in this country, every one of the parents who are like me because we got better things to do than to defend our kids," Ms Husar said.**

**"I have got one thing to say to every single child on the autism spectrum who is going into a classroom today, whether that's a mainstream class, whether that's a support unit or a school with a specific purpose - that you matter.**

**"That you can be included and you ought to be included. And that even on the days that are hard, when you're frustrated and your disability makes you angry, you're still better than she is on her best day."**

Spectrum Labor agrees. Autistics are owed an apology and we are incomparably better than Pauline Hanson. Autistic advocates have better things to do than pop up every few weeks to denounce yet another anti-Autistic bigot who gets splashed across the media.

Even though anti-vilification laws might afford loopholes to people who want to put forward conservative discriminatory views in the name of "debate", the very existence of anti-vilification protections will make them think twice and may actually leave a bit of copy space on the newspapers' pages for more positive media portrayals.

Similar vilifications are applied to Autistics and other people with disability in the workplace. The *Guardian* on December 7, 2019 reported on Tory candidate Sally-Ann Hart: **A Conservative parliamentary candidate has defended a controversial fringe view that people with learning disabilities should be paid less than the minimum wage because "they don't understand money".**

Sadly, this is not a fringe view in Australia, where people with disability sometimes work for as little as \$1 per hour as reported in Pro-Bono News on January 25, 2019. **"Our advocacy for the rights of people with disability in ADEs [Australian Disability Enterprises] is based on the situations of our members and the people with disability who come to us for support regarding the lack of genuine employment opportunities and unfair treatment, including inequitable wages in ADEs," co-CEO Therese Sands told Pro Bono News.**

**Sands said the award was being formally reviewed in the Fair Work Commission due to the low wages that were being paid to many employees of ADEs.**

***"The work ADE employees do is valuable. These employees work extremely hard, yet in many instances are paid as little as \$1 an hour," she said.***

***"These wages aren't fair and are discriminatory. Everyone deserves a fair day's pay for a fair day's work."***

Obviously negative media portrayals of workers with disability, including Autistic workers who need accommodations, have contributed to this perception of their meagre worth in the workplace and contributes to lifelong poverty and inequality. Outlawing media vilification will go a long way towards correcting these misimpressions and achieving equality.

#### ANTIVAXXERS VILIFY AUTISTICS, THREATEN DOCTORS AND CAUSE DEADLY EPIDEMICS

Naturally Spectrum Labor is alarmed by the re-emergence of childhood illnesses and epidemics, due to the reluctance of some parents to vaccinate their children, because of a hysterical campaign falsely blaming vaccines for a non-existent Autism epidemic. Spectrum Labor declares that we are not a disease, we are not an epidemic, Autistics have been and will be amongst us for all times and great minds don't think alike – Autistics' unique thinking styles make an invaluable contribution to society. We regard these negative depictions of Autism as fear mongering hate speech, with disastrous consequences for Autistics, and deadly consequences for new born babies and immune-suppressed individuals with the decrease in herd immunity.

The vaccine-Autism link has been decisively debunked yet antivaxxers continue their scare-mongering against vaccines. In the process they are vilifying Autistics as being brain damaged and vaccine damaged. Both Pauline Hanson and Donald Trump have jumped on the anti-vaxxer bandwagon, highlighting the false vaccine-Autism link, and we regard this as an extension of their usual scapegoating politics. These conservative politicians target the pro-vaccine scientific community, who they don't like because they warn us about climate change. Conservative politicians also scapegoat Autistics as a burden, a waste of funds and a threat to their non-Autistic peers at school. The rise of the far right in Australia heralds further attacks on Autistics and we must be protected by anti-vilification laws.

In an ABC news item posted on March 7 2017, ***Pauline Hanson described the Government's 'no jab, no pay' policy as a "dictatorship" and said parents should do their own research into vaccinations.*** This was clearly one of her many dog whistling remarks implying a link between vaccines and Autism, again invoking the stereotype of Autistic kids as brain damaged space wasters in classrooms, threatening the educational standards of other kids. These remarks have been condemned by the AMA who are concerned about falling vaccination rates.

***"I'm utterly appalled by Senator Hanson's comments. She needs to realise that she's a serious player in Australian politics now," Dr Gannon said.***

**"[With] 10 per cent of Australians indicating an intention to vote for One Nation, she can no longer make fringe statements that are dangerous to the health of the whole community..."**

As reported in *Inside.com*, December 14, 2019 "The powerful media mogul at the core of Trump's debunked views on vaccines and autism" ..... **"When I was growing up, autism wasn't really a factor," Trump told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel in 2007. "And now all of a sudden, it's an epidemic ... My theory is the shots. We're giving these massive injections at one time, and I really think it does something to the children." He has repeated this theory on Twitter, television, and debate stages.**

**Trump's conspiratorial thinking almost worked its way into the policy pipeline. Before he was even inaugurated, he reportedly invited a prominent vaccine skeptic, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., to chair a new commission on vaccines. That commission ultimately never materialized, and Trump has largely — but not entirely — avoided the topic since becoming president. Still, his administration has presided over an alarming string of measles and mumps outbreaks spurred, experts say, by low vaccination rates in some communities.....**

.....**'They have to get the shots': Trump, once a vaccine skeptic, changes his tune amid measles outbreaks** By HELEN BRANSWELL APRIL 26, 2019.....

Doctors who are encouraging childhood vaccinations are now being targeted by a massive network of organised online trolls, some of whom threaten violence. As reported in the Daily Mail on January 20, 2020, **Pediatrician gets DEATH THREATS after posting a pro-vaccination video on TikTok reassuring young people that they don't cause autism**

A supporter of vaccines, Adam Stone @athompstone tweeted a reply to the abuse on January 12, **"I have been diagnosed with mild autism (Asperger's until DSM V). Even I am confident vaccines didn't cause it. This drives me crazy - am I so horrible as I am that antivaxxers think it would have been better for me to die as a child from a preventable disease?"**

From Dr. Nicole Baldwin's Facebook page on January 17, 2020, **ICYMI...Over the past 5 days I have been the subject of a large, coordinated global attack from the antivaxx community both online and offline due to a provaccine video that I created on Tik Tok and shared across my social media platforms.**

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**\*Continue to spread the word - VACCINES ARE SAFE. VACCINES ARE EFFECTIVE. VACCINES DO NOT CAUSE AUTISM.**



**\*If you see harassing comments on any of my social media platforms, please report those and send me screen shots of any threats.**

**\*If you see fraudulent reviews online, please report those as well.**

**\*If you see photos of me that have been altered, please screenshot, send it to me and report the user.**

**\*If you would like to join the fight against antivaxx attacks such as this, check out [www.ShotsHeard.com](http://www.ShotsHeard.com) to join a team that combats these attacks.**

**Thank you to my office staff, my online team, and my amazing online community for your support in this fight!**

**#vaccines #vaccinateyourkids #somedocs @ohioaap @ameracadpeds**

The Autistic community is being demonised by this worldwide network of thousands of anti-vaxxer trolls, continuously spreading a dehumanising, debasing message that we are damaged, an epidemic and better off dead. Of course, this makes us feel very uneasy. Anti-vilification protections on social media would curb the activities of these hateful fanatics and give us recognition and dignity.

#### VILIFICATION FALSELY PORTRAYS AUTISTICS AS VIOLENT

Anti-vilification laws have limited the racists' ability to stereotype some ethnic groups and religions as being inherently violent and dangerous. Increasingly, Autistics need similar legal protections. Autism is increasingly falsely being raised by the media as a motivating factor in aggressive rape/murder cases and mass shootings.

Spectrum Labor does not dispute the fact that some Autistics have committed unthinkable brutal crimes. What we notice is that Autistic traits are sometimes highlighted in these circumstances in ways which detract from other possible motivations and potentially stigmatise the Autistic community as a whole, by making people wonder if this is an indication of how Autistic minds work.

Sadly, in 2012, Adam Lanza, a young Autistic, killed 20 children and six staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in the US, as well as his mother, before killing himself. According to the Independent on October 25, 2017 Autism was not the cause of this massacre - ***The [unnamed] person also told the FBI agent Adam Lanza never accepted he had Asperger's syndrome, a condition on the autism spectrum, and never took medication he was prescribed. A report by the Connecticut child advocate in 2014 concluded Lanza's autism spectrum disorder and other psychiatric problems didn't cause or lead directly to the massacre. The report said Nancy Lanza rejected psychologists' recommendations her son be medicated and undergo rigorous treatment as a child for anxiety and other conditions. It said Adam Lanza, his parents and his educators contributed to his social isolation by not confronting his problems.***

***Another person told the FBI that Lanza essentially had become a "recluse" who played video games all day. The person said Lanza had no friends, was computer savvy and became very interested in firearms.***

**Lanza shot the children and educators with an AR-15-style rifle legally purchased by his mother, who took him to shooting ranges, authorities have said.**

Spectrum Labor is saddened by these tragic deaths. We feel that better community attitudes towards Autism and mental health, and more positive media portrayals of Autism could have helped Adam and Nancy Lanza accept the Autism diagnosis and psychologists' recommendations, and helped avert this whole tragedy.

As an example of vilification relating to the actions of Lanza, Spectrum Labor co-founder Philip Gluyas was outrightly accused of being "The next Adam Lanza" by American conspiracy theorist John Best Junior. Philip sued Best for defamation prior to this statement and the accusation was allowed to be added to the prosecution case. In the hearing held at the Supreme Court of Victoria on January 21, 2013, the published statement on Best's blog was presented and in his decision on January 24, 2013, Justice Stephen Kaye stated in paragraph 40; ***It is neither desirable or necessary that I set out the article, which is severely defamatory of the plaintiff. It imputes, if not expressly states, that there is a significant risk that the plaintiff will replicate the appalling massacre perpetrated by Adam Lanza in Newtown. The article imputes that the plaintiff is likely to conduct such an outrage because of his mental condition. It alleges that the plaintiff is subject to a court order that he not work anywhere in Australia because he is "so deranged", and because he has a "violent history of attacking co-workers". Thus, each of the first four imputations clearly emerge from a simple reading of the article published by the defendant.***

Much loved Melbourne comedienne Eurydice Dixon was shockingly raped and murdered in 2018 by Jaymes Todd, who had ***a sexual sadism disorder, and had watched violent pornography before and after he attacked Ms Dixon as she walked home after performing comedy in the city on June 12 last year***, according to ABC News on September 2, 2019.... ***The court also heard that at the time of the offence, Todd lived with his parents in Broadmeadows in a home of "rotting refuse" and "squalor" which would have affected his emotional state.***

The dignity and compassion maintained by the victim's father, Jeremy Dixon, is extraordinary. ***"What I wish for Jaymes Todd and what I believe Eurydice would wish, is that he gets better, and ... realises what he's done.***

***"I extend my sympathies, my sincere sympathy for those who love him. It's a terrible tragedy all round..."*** While the murderer was on the Autism Spectrum, this wasn't mentioned by the ABC News outlet as this clearly wasn't cited by the judge as the reason for the crime or Todd's high chance of re-offending, and it may have been Eurydice's wish that prejudicial information should not be included in the judgement or sentencing of her murderer.

Disappointingly, on August 15, 2019, The Guardian – usually a progressive news source – stated, ***The court was told Todd, who has autism, spotted Dixon at Flinders Street Station after he had spent the afternoon drinking alcohol and smoking cannabis.***

The Guardian chose to highlight Autism despite the fact that Todd's Autism was clearly not the cause of the crime. In so doing, The Guardian has bought into Autism "Bewareness", contributing to the false portrayal of Autism as a rape/murder risk factor and this is disappointing.

According to the New York Times on August 10 2019, ***A Common Trait Among Mass Killers: Hatred Toward Women - The motivations of men who commit mass shootings are often muddled, complex or unknown. But one common thread that connects many of them — other than access to powerful firearms — is a history of hating women, assaulting wives, girlfriends and female family members, or sharing misogynistic views online, researchers say.*** According to these researchers it's misogyny, not Autism (and not Islam) that should be highlighted in these violent crimes.

We note that some mass murders are committed by criminals who are clearly non-Autistic, as they use devious charms and lies to entrap their victims - yet these crimes are not thought to be an indication of how the non-Autistic mind works. Negative stereotyping is applied to the misunderstood minority group only.

The repeated references to the danger posed by "lone wolves", be they Autistic or not, is leading to suspicion of many Autistics' preference for spending time alone. Well meaning stereotypes, that Autistics have more simple or natural minds, that we think like a cow for instance, can quickly morph into mistaken views that Autistics think or react like animals and lack self-control, and are thus more prone to violence. Repeated sensationalised media portrayals of extreme forms of high care needs Autism, with communication barriers and challenging behaviours, interspersed with spine chilling reporting of horrific lone wolf crimes committed by Autistics, creates the knee-jerk reaction that these people need to be shut away, that they are a puzzle piece, a danger, that they need to be spoken for by experts, that they are damaged... they need a cure.... we had better avoid vaccines just in case our kids turn out like them.....

Anti-vilification laws protecting the Autistic minority will introduce more balance and lead to more careful and responsible reporting about incidents where Autistics are brought before the law.

#### VILIFICATION PREVENTS TIMELY DIAGNOSIS AND SELF AWARENESS

Successful, well adjusted Autistics are everywhere - working, studying, pursuing our private lives and interests - but this isn't well reflected in the media. Some news media would prefer to cynically sensationalise Autistics who have extremely high over-sensitivities, self-injurious behaviours, multiple co-occurring disabilities or psychiatric disturbances, and present them as the face of "Autism".

We totally understand the desperation of families who need better access to therapies, services, supported accommodation and respite and we congratulate them on tirelessly putting their case to the media and demanding full NDIS funding. Spectrum Labor is concerned that a one-sided presentation of Autism in the media confuses the public about

the diversity of the Autism Spectrum and makes people think Autism is an insurmountable problem or something to hide. Autistics often face comments like, "But you don't look Autistic" and inferences that Autism is a fad diagnosis.

Autism is based on the definitions provided in the DSM 5 which describe different social and thinking styles and behaviours. Autism is not a form of multiple disability, although some people who have multiple disabilities are also on the Autism Spectrum. Also, Autism is not a mental illness, although a combination of over-sensitivities, bullying, conformist pressures and poverty takes its toll on many Autistics' mental health.

Spectrum Labor opposes the misuse of "Autism" as an umbrella term to describe severe multiple disability and we would like the media to report more even-handedly and responsibly. The existence of anti-vilification laws to prevent hate speech against Autistics will hammer home this message, and demonstrate that Autistics are people too, who care about how we are portrayed, even if no case is ever prosecuted under these laws.

When "Autism" is misused as an umbrella term to describe multiple co-occurring disabilities, or equated with psychiatric disturbance this:

- Contributes to media misrepresentations of the entire Autistic Spectrum, leading to loss of employment opportunities and added difficulties in forming friendships and relationships
- Promotes the idea that all Autistics need to be represented by parents, charities and experts while de-legitimising self-advocacy
- Causes undiagnosed Autistic adults to mistakenly believe they don't need a diagnosis because they are "not very Autistic", thus leaving them without self-awareness, accommodations or support
- Adds to pressure on Autistics to conceal or play down our diagnoses, to avoid misconceptions, by adopting masking behaviours to blend in, instead of being ourselves, which stops us properly contributing and leads to mental health pressures
- The misuse of the term Autism to cover a myriad of severe disabilities promotes the notion of an Autism cure, when in fact most Autistics prefer being the way we are and do not seek a cure. We want Autism Acceptance.

#### DO AUTISTICS FACE SIMILAR FORMS OF VILIFICATION AS RACIAL OR RELIGIOUS MINORITIES?

We support racial and religious anti-vilification provisions and we believe that anti-Autistic vilification provisions are needed for similar reasons. From the Victorian Human Rights website:

***Behaviour that is likely to be seen as racial or religious vilification includes:***

- ***speaking about a person's race or religion in a way that could make other people hate or ridicule that person***

- ***publishing claims that a racial or religious group is involved in serious crimes without any proof***
- ***repeated and serious spoken or physical abuse because of the race or religion of another person***
- ***encouraging violence against people who belong to a particular race or religion, or damaging their property***
- ***encouraging people to hate a racial or religious group using flyers, stickers, posters, a speech or publication, or using websites or email.***

In this submission, Spectrum Labor has put forward a strong case that we are subjected to similar behaviours with unwelcome, stigmatising and sometimes dangerous results for people on the Autism Spectrum. Autism is spoken about in ways that can make other people hate or ridicule us. We are being unfairly portrayed as being prone to crime without proof. We do face bullying and abuse and these negative portrayals are promoted through various forms of media. The rise of the far right is exacerbating these threats to our Autistic minority and we do need anti-vilification protections in place.

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