

January 28, 2020

**Select Committee on Autism
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT 2600**

To the Committee,

RE: Services, Support and Life Outcomes for Autistic People

I am a high functioning Autistic adult, born in 1965 and diagnosed originally with Asperger's Syndrome on February 4, 1997 – updated to Autism in May 2013 upon the publication of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual Version 5 (DSM-5). I am making this personal submission in concert with the submission made by Spectrum Labor – a group I co-founded in October 2017. In this submission I shall be relying on my personal experience and so forth and I ask that the Spectrum Labor submission be considered before this contribution as I refer to it a number of times.

PART A: The current approaches and barriers to consistent, timely and best practice Autism diagnosis

I was lucky in this regard, as I had taken the attitude of pursuing the question of “Why am I different?” I suspect not many in my position are prepared to do that, and that is a problem in itself. My own diagnosis arrived on the back of simply taking the time to find a psychiatrist who was willing to bulk bill (something much more difficult to find in the 1990's compared to today), and would just listen and discuss the prevailing issues in my life. This gave him all the background that was needed. I'd tried once before but that psychiatrist played the “What did you do” to try and shift the blame to me when I knew that was not the case at all. I look back on that as the psychiatrist looking for my instinct and getting me to use it – when I didn't have any. That is typical of an undiagnosed Autistic who was yet to adjust and learn instinct manually.

In January 1997, I saw a commercial about Autism. I had already heard about it, and my mother had told me that she had suspected I was Autistic when I was two years old. But the diagnostic criteria at the time (1967) did not fit. The only thing I knew about it before this commercial was that they wanted to be alone. I preferred solitude as well, but as before the criteria wasn't there – or so I thought. This commercial told me of a second factor that also fitted me – the need for routine. It set me thinking that while I figured per the previous information that I wasn't Autistic, maybe there was something similar. That caused me to contact my psychiatrist and discuss the matter with him and ask if there was something similar.

In 1994, the DSM-IV was introduced and it included Asperger's Syndrome. My psychiatrist mentioned this to me and in discussion we agreed that I fulfilled this criteria when I asked the obvious question; “Do you think I have Asperger's?” His answer was “Yes”.

That's how I was diagnosed.

I am however aware that my experience is something of an anomaly to the norm. It is more common to come across psychiatrists who have no clue and try to pull the stunt of calling on a non existent instinct.

PART B: The prevalence of Autism in Australia

This brings up a debate that irritates me a great deal, a debate detailed in the Spectrum Labor submission. The idea that Autism came from almost nowhere in the 1990's when the DSM-IV was introduced. There is a difference between diagnosis and existence. We have come a long way in recognition of the various factors that make up the Autistic spectrum.

I take the view – and I draw on my own experience at school and at work prior to the introduction of the DSM-IV – that there have been many undiagnosed Autistics in both environments. I put my own hand up as an example – at primary school from 1970 to 1976 and at high school from 1977 to 1981, as well as at work from 1985 to 1991. Any Autistic around my age would be the same.

I'll also add the name of another genius to the mix per the Spectrum Labor submission who I certainly believe to have been Autistic – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. He predates the other genius' imputed.

PART C: The misdiagnosis and under representation of females in Autism data, and gender bias in Autism assessment and support services

Being male, I'm not in a great position to comment on this from experience obviously. However I am aware of the issue, and the point that needs to be made here is that there are reports that females are better at masking their traits than males. This doesn't necessarily preclude a female being diagnosed as the lower functioning would be picked up.

PART D: International best practice with regards to diagnosis, support services and education, effectiveness, cost and required intensity.

I am of the view that international best practice has to be in complete compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled People. This means – as mentioned in the Spectrum Labor submission – full diagnosis and full support, with plenty of flexibility. I also believe that diagnosis needs to be of high quality, and required for access to support services. There are people who are self identifying as Autistic, and this process being in place would be the appropriate way to put a stop to that practice. Self identification affects the condition's credibility in the eyes of authorities and the community in a negative manner.

PART E: The demand for and adequacy of Commonwealth, state and local government services to meet the needs of Autistic people at all life stages

The Spectrum Labor submission details the general issues across a wide area. In my submission I will describe my own experience and where things are right and where they are wrong – the latter is a situation that I do not want anyone else to go through. I will detail my experience in education, employment, justice and housing in Part F.

In this part I want to talk about my experience in sensory sensitivities in the community, and my lifestyle as it stands. Sensory issues were mentioned in the Spectrum Labor submission. For myself – I don't like movie theatres, and when I do go I aim for what the cinemas call Gold Class where there is more space and a bit more privacy. I also aim for times when crowds are smaller if possible. This was the plan when I saw Star Wars: The

Rise of Skywalker on January 14, 2020 - waiting for the rush in December to calm down. With shops I again try for quiet times although it is at times hard to avoid. I visit the library a lot for reasons I'll get into shortly, and my normal procedure if I'm in there working on my laptop is to have music on in my headphones. The use of headphones is common for Autistics.

I travel on the train a lot. Aside from the fact that I enjoy it, it's hard when I have to travel during the peak period or when things are busy for other reasons. When I travel on V/Line – the regional rail provider in Victoria - I use a power point if there's one available (with a surge protected double adapter) and use the same stunt I use in the library. But the availability should be wider, and the power points should also be protected. My favourite travel option is on the board the New South Wales XPT, where I can book a seat in a cabin and hope like mad that the other seats in the cabin (there are three in total) aren't booked. This has happened. There is a power point in there but it's not a good one because power drops out. It would be nice if that was more widely available as well in the same terms as the Victorian trains.

Train travel is something that Autistics are generally interested in, and should be wider in general than what it is. I do understand that it depends on usage by the general public and if that use isn't there we aren't going to get the service. But there is one exception – the Overland. It's frequency at present is appalling for a daylight service between two state capital cities within a day's journey. It would be beneficial for Autistic travellers like me and the general public if Great Southern Railway were to have the Overland taken off them and placed in the hands of the Victorian government if they are willing to take it. They already heavily subsidise the service to keep it running.

For anyone on the Autistic spectrum who is not able to work for whatever the reason, the focus should be on said Autistic's special interests. For myself, I am forced to fund my interests on the DSP and this has meant serious cutbacks on a number of things, having to stay in hostels which I hate. The biggest expense is my Australian Rules Football research project. This requires travel and accommodation across a wide area, especially to Adelaide, Canberra and Perth as well as various regional locations. And I need more as the research I am doing is through newspapers that are yet to make their way onto the National Library's Trove website, and in some cases aren't even on microfilm. A number of papers are only held in the state of origin. There is no other way. This project is the reason I visit libraries a lot as previously mentioned.

I have other interests – the two other major ones are professional wrestling and politics. Neither of them attract as much of a monetary output to cover, although travel has increased a tad to Melbourne from my regional home since I joined the Labor Party in order to participate in party policy committees as well as other events such as Victorian State Conference. Monetary restrictions and the shift of the dates prevented me from attending the Federal Conference in Adelaide in 2018.

The one thing that can be done to help – and this is a general issue as well – is to increase the Disability Support Pension. It has been behind since 2000 when the GST was introduced. The DSP at that time went up by only 4 percent, while most services and so forth went up by the full ten percent despite promises that it wouldn't. I think the only thing that didn't were public transport fares, which went up by about seven to eight percent. But that was still too much. The DSP needs to be put up by at least another 4 percent on this basis, or better still six percent. Honestly I believe similar consideration should be given to the carer's allowance although I do not know how much that was put up by as a result of

the GST being introduced.

PART F: The interaction between services provided by the Commonwealth, state and local governments

I: Health and mental health

Compared to many I do okay, but I could do better. In my recent move from Ballarat to the Macedon Ranges, I was hit with limited options when it came to bulk billing. This is bad for Autistics and brings up the controversial issue of Medicare funding and the Medicare freeze in particular. The Victorian Royal Commission in to Mental Health (mentioned in the Spectrum Labor submission) is ongoing but the Commonwealth has to come on board at least in part with the requirements.

The reason I do okay is something that I consider essential for an Autistic. Adjusting to one's condition and using its positives and limiting the influence of its negatives. I try to do this and it isn't easy as sometimes the things I need are either not available at all or too expensive. I guess the one that affects me the most at present is the lack of access to a bulk billing psychologist or psychiatrist purely for counselling assistance on an as needs basis. I had one in Melbourne from 2004 to 2018, but he closed his Melbourne office to concentrate his work in Central Australia. There are other things that need to be done, but the ability of the government to deal with them is limited as they are online situations in social media on websites run out of other countries – primarily the United States (Facebook springs to mind). That also brings in wider issues which I will speak of later.

II: Education

My own school experience could have been a lot worse than it was, but it had it's moments. One primary school principal blamed my parents for the issues I had, causing my father to give him an earful in response. The result was that I changed schools. The matter was even brought to the attention of the state government through our local state member, which did help the move although it was primarily through an offer made by the principal of the school my mother was the librarian at. That is key to why I mention this. Things settled after that. Previously I was wandering from school to get away from my teacher who was treating me like I was an idiot.

High school was better – as forewarned is forearmed. My parents brought the school principal and deputy principal up to speed with my issues and they were receptive. I was still bullied but the school did it's best. At the time I wasn't happy, but looking back now it was okay – certainly compared to work.

III: Employment

My employment period was horrific. It was a six and a half year mistake. I was bullied way worse than I was at school and unlike school protection was totally absent. I was expected to adjust on an instinct I didn't have and as I didn't know I was Autistic at this time I couldn't without help. And that help was totally absent. All employers must provide appropriate help in these circumstances. I transferred through three different work locations before quitting at the end of 1991 after the Administrative Appeals Tribunal accused me of wilful and serious misconduct – an allegation I deny to this day due to provocation.

I did get another job, but I won't detail that as it involved the Defence Department as a

civilian. It was for just six months from late 1996 to early 1997. I have not worked since.

The perfect solution for me with this is for both to be punished for the way they treated me, but that's out of reach. My lifestyle has now developed in a way where there is no room for paid work. Refer back to Part E for the details. Not only that, I believe that the work place as it stands right now is not compatible with me. The Spectrum Labor submission makes mention of multi-skilling as an example. I for one can't do that. I need to specialise and that sort of job simply does not exist.

IV: Justice

My contact with the justice system has been limited but not absent. The only time I was a defendant was an unfortunate situation that I won't detail because it is subject to a mediation agreement. I have prosecuted a couple of intervention orders successfully. I have more experience in the civil system. I have three successful prosecutions of defamation – two of them against overseas defendants. A fourth went to another mediation that again I can't detail. In all I have been to the AAT as mentioned in this part under employment, as well as the Victorian Civil and Administration Tribunal, the Federal Court, the Federal Magistrate's Court and all three levels in Victoria, Magistrate's (where the two intervention orders were), County (where one of the three successful defamation actions was) and Supreme (where the other two prosecutions were). I consider myself a bit of an anomaly against the Amaze employment report (mentioned as an appendix in the Spectrum Labor submission) where the belief is being a lawyer is something an Autistic wouldn't be able to do. It entirely depends on the circumstances and the interests therein. During the process of the second of the two defamation actions in the Supreme Court of Victoria, the Associate Justice actually referred to me as a paralegal. A compliment that I have taken on board even though I don't practice it for others.

It's not over yet either, as I seek legal options if there are any to deal with existing human rights issues for the Autistic community as a whole, as well as for myself on social media. The petition mentioned in the Spectrum Labor submission is essentially my idea and forms a part of that.

I am aware that other Autistics aren't as fortunate – not understanding the various traps in the criminal system. I should actually mention one experience I had that goes to the issue of police not understanding Autism at times. I was involved in an incident consequent to someone going in to bat for the defendant in one of the intervention orders I was prosecuting. At the time it happened I was shaking like a leaf, and I was accused of taking something and I was told to tell them what it was. Naturally I denied I had taken anything, but the officer concerned persisted as though she didn't believe me even when I told her I was Autistic. The incident went no further as police ruled that there was nothing in it from either side. The other person never took any action despite being invited to do so, and as it was related to the intervention order I concentrated on that instead of taking my own action.

That situation cannot be repeated to any Autistic. If we are frightened by something we will shake quite literally from the fright.

V: Housing

A lot of the issues I have in this area was covered in the Spectrum Labor submission, in particular the need for space. I was stuck on the Victorian Housing Commission waiting list

for 17 years before the current accommodation came up. Whilst it is a state issue, there should be pressure placed on all states for not just the locations and space but any other requirements as well – within reason of course. When I was living in Ballarat in private rental it was tough. Not much space and being in a block of units restricted solitude, and at the time there was a person in charge of the Grampians office that was distinctly averse to Autistic needs. It was why I moved my waiting list options to the Loddon office in Bendigo that looked after the Macedon Ranges as well as Castlemaine and Bendigo itself. I should not have needed to do that, although there were other reasons for the listing preference. The person involved I have since discovered has retired. The person in charge of the Loddon office was far more receptive – especially when I tried (and failed) to enforce certain factors through VCAT (one of the occasions mentioned in the Justice section above).

Families who require housing with an Autistic as part of the household should be placed on a priority list straight away. The family is likely to be struggling as one parent at least has to be home at all times to look after the Autistic in childhood and in some cases in adulthood. This means that even affordable private housing is out of reach and by a long way, and public housing is the only alternative. Waiting lists in this area are way too long in general and states should be encouraged strongly to reverse that situation with new stock. In the case of the Autistic community as the Spectrum Labor submission indicates, housing needs to have space and solitude.

PART G: The social and economic cost of failing to provide adequate and appropriate services, including to support key life stage transitions of Autistic people

A key to an Autistic's entire life is stability. This is a reflection on our need for routine, whether it be a base routine as I have myself or a more stringent routine as those on the lower end of the Spectrum have. Breaking of said routine causes mental instability, and the lower on the Spectrum the Autistic is the more profound the reaction. The worst case scenario is self injury. An Autistic's routine is sacrosanct. The mental instability impacts on the health system in a number of different ways and also impacts on community stigma on the assumption that this is typical of an Autistic full stop. It's not – it only happens upon some level of provocation.

A major cost was revealed just recently by the ABC in an article published on their website on January 23, 2020. Titled "Children with autism in WA 'languishing' in mental health wards, youth advocates say", it provides an insight into a specific cost example of the lack of appropriate and adequate services. In this case it's a hold up to the operation of the health system in general leading inevitably to access issues in the community as a whole. It is not right that anyone who shouldn't be in a mental health unit is in effect trapped there with nowhere else to go. I note that the Western Australian state government is blaming the underfunding of the NDIS (which I go into later in this submission) and while that's a factor it's not the whole story. In Victoria similar things are happening. Mental health beds need to be increased – but also services and supports for the Autistic community has to be brought online. Not doing this is bad for society.

The worst scenario of all – and I really hate to mention this but as a warning I have to – is an Autistic failing to adjust to his or her condition entirely, and consequently suffering such a mental health breakdown that the person commits a major crime. This has happened. In the United States of America at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012. Adam Lanza was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome

when he was 13, nine years before this fateful event. According to his father in a revealing and harrowing article in the New Yorker Magazine about 12 months after the event, Lanza denied his diagnosis outright. He wanted nothing to do with it and as a result he never adjusted. I hold the very firm belief that had he adjusted and not – I assume – been afraid of the condition, the 20 children that died that day at Sandy Hook would be alive today.

Of course, Australia's gun laws will prevent such a thing from happening here, but it is nevertheless essential that the adjustment be made due to the social cost in that case leaving an Autistic at odds with the criminal justice system. While it is needed to provide supports for those in that position – like the old saying in medicine; prevention is better than cure. It is better to prevent the Autistic from being in that position in the first place than to deal with it once they are in that position.

The Spectrum Labor submission lists our positives. Equally we need to put a stop to the negative outlook some have creating the stigma that makes people afraid of Autism. That fear restrains Autistics socially and also causes an inability for us to participate in the economy as the Prime Minister states “The best form of welfare is a job”. This is impossible as long as this fear continues. It needs to be recognised, put in it's place and over run with the positives.

PART H: The adequacy and efficacy of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for Autistic people

I: Autism understanding within the NDIS

As mentioned in the Spectrum Labor submission, I participated in the original enquiry by the Productivity Commission and provided the study noted. It was very frustrating that it was ignored and the result was a serious underestimation in funding requirements. This reflects rather badly on their understanding, and this has in effect been passed on to the NDIA. For this reason they need a refresher course. I can't add anything here that hasn't already been mentioned in the Spectrum Labor submission – except to say that as I am high functioning there is no funding available for me at all. See the needs I have back in Part E of my submission. This is a clear indication certainly for me as I am not able to get into the work force that the NDIS is not for all people that are legally disabled as defined in the Disability Discrimination Act.

II: The utility of the Early Childhood Early Intervention Pathway for Autistic children

I see no need to add to the Spectrum Labor submission here.

III: The ability of the NDIS to support Autistic people with complex needs, including those transiting from prison settings

As I am not an Autistic with complex needs nor am I a person who has ever been in prison I can't comment here.

IV: The adequacy and appropriateness of supports to empower Autistic people to participate in the NDIS planning process, and exercise self-determination through choice and control over their support services

As a non participant in the NDIS as previously noted, I can't comment from experience here, but I have heard the stories that form the base of the Spectrum Labor submission in

this part. Speaking for myself I will put a figure on what is needed to make the NDIS work properly as well as expand it's accessibility as it was intended to be. The total budget I understand (combining state and federal funding) is \$22 billion at maximum. This has to be doubled – at least. There can be no excuse. The NDIS is a mess and it needs to be fixed, and it desperately needs a cash injection.

PART I: The development of a National Autism Strategy and its interaction with the next phase of the National Disability Strategy

I will follow up here on the observations made in the Spectrum Labor submission by saying that the so called experts usually have an agenda based in what they think is needed. These are the people who promote controversial treatments, and seek to undermine high functioning Autistics like me who understand the condition at the coal face. We get a lot of flack from these experts and from parents of low functioning Autistics who insist that we have no idea what those low functioning Autistics are going through.

I can safely say that I do understand, and they (the parents and the experts) don't. We even have adult Autistics saying the same thing purely because they have had negative experiences themselves and are resigned and accepting of the negative stigma the community has foisted on us. A National Autism Strategy has to put the brakes on that because it will not help. I have personally been fighting these people on social media for some time and it is very frustrating. I can give you two examples in the appendix of this submission. The first (Appendix 1) is a horrific article published in the Scientific American by one such Autistic from America, Yuval Levental. My response to his comment follows (Appendix 2). The second (Appendix 3) is another piece that appeared in The Guardian from British Autistic Thomas Clements. My response to that follows (Appendix 4).

Further examples of my understanding of the issues can be found on my website in it's section about Autism;

<http://www.philgluyas.com/autism.htm>

PART J: The adequacy of funding for research into Autism

The Spectrum Labor submission pretty much covers this. I'll just add that if the Committee will look at the articles on my website, the theory of sensory overload is mentioned there. That is my theory that Spectrum Labor supports. The theory of Autistic behaviours is also my theory.

PART K: The social inclusion and participation of Autistic people within the economy and community

The mention of food in the Spectrum Labor submission reminds me of my own issues in this area. My taste buds are my sensory weakness that needs adjustment, but recent battles with Lipid Disorder has restricted my diet and made things difficult on the very financial level the Spectrum Labor submission speaks of. This is especially a problem when I travel as doing the things that are normally needed are just not practical – especially in hostels. Of course the drought is not helping in prices of the basics in meat, fruit and vegetables, but it still requires a solution. The mentioned rise in welfare payments in the Spectrum Labor submission will go to this as does my own commentary previously about the DSP specifically, and anything special over the top should really be in the sights of the NDIS.

PART L: The capacity and sustainability of advocacy, self-advocacy and self-determination supports for Autistic people, including mechanisms to self-represent to government as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Spectrum Labor submission speaks of an Autism Equality Commissioner, a position that I myself put my hand up for in a speech I presented at a Spectrum Labor fringe event at the 2019 ALP Victorian State Conference – on the proviso that my office be in Melbourne and not Sydney where the Human Rights Commission is based. Self advocacy is very important and the Spectrum Labor submission makes mention of issues that I touched on in Part I above with Autism Speaks being just one example. It is of course fact that low functioning Autistics who are unable to communicate without assistance cannot do this, but agenda based advocacy that is not in the best interests of the Autistic community should be prevented or put in it's place.

I have seen parents panic, and fall into the trap of negativity – whether it be squealing for a cure, or the false beliefs of causation; or both. Parents want a “normal” life. What is “normal”? In the human race there is no such thing. Normal is a dryer setting. The concept of neurodiversity is based in it's definition – brain difference. There are parents and indeed adult Autistics like the ones I mentioned in Part I who see neurodiversity as a “movement” by that name. In fact it is rightly called the Autism Rights Movement – a concept frankly that these people oppose. So in effect, they oppose the very points made in the UNCRPD. For the sake of the Autistic community this has to stop and the Spectrum Labor petition that I put together plays a big role in this effort. I want to see this Committee do the same thing. I see Spectrum Labor as a big player in this in the political arena, and maybe I could be a little biased in saying that. But I believe in the submission there and believe in the concepts supported and so forth.

There is a date for Autistic Pride Day established – June 18. Originally started by the defunct Aspies for Freedom in Britain, it would be great if Australia could re-establish this day and press it as a worldwide event to consider. There is also April as Autism Awareness Month and April 2 as Autism Awareness Day. This was originally started by Autism Speaks but we now need to change it up – including changing the name to Autism Acceptance Month and Autism Acceptance Day, as well as changing the colour presently established (blue – as in “Light it up Blue”) to another colour. This is to get away entirely from the Autism Speaks model as they have had a history of establishing the negativity that has to stop. Blue is generally a negative colour – seen as it's defined adjective “melancholy, sad, or depressed”. Red has been suggested, but that is an angry colour. The best available colour in my view is Gold. Bright and valuable, and others have also noted that the chemical symbol for Gold is “Au” - the same two letters Autistics use to identify themselves on social media due to it being the first two letters of Autism. Indeed, I use the letters myself on Facebook.

PART M: Any bill that relates to matters within the scope of this inquiry that is referred to this committee

The Spectrum Labor submission has already pointed to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) with regard to the petition and the opposition to the second draft of the Religious Protection Bill.

On the DDA, there is something that I need to speak about. It goes to the issue of employment. I refer to section 11 of the Act which speaks of “unjustifiable hardship”. The

definitions provided here are being abused by employers. The Spectrum Labor submission speaks of the high expectations in social skills. Employers are abusing this by claiming a social skill requirement that in reality doesn't exist where it can't be controlled. Social communication is a two way street in the work place, and Autistics can't comply with their part of the bargain if the other side refuses to. The employer sides against the Autistic. This is what I went through with Australia Post – without the Autism diagnosis I would add. The claim to section 11 of the DDA in this respect has to be restricted to employment where dealing with the general public is an inherent part of the job. One can't control the general public anywhere near as easily as fellow employees. This would take in jobs in retail and hospitality as examples. Call centres would be another one although that would depend on individual circumstances.

This bad attitude is even demonstrated in disgusting terms in Hansard. In the House of Representatives on November 17, 1997, during the debate on the Youth Allowance Bill, the then Member for Longman, Mal Brough, said the following;

“As a former employer, I put it to you: if a young person came to me and did not have either the social skills, education, experience or training that I was looking for, it would not matter if they went and sat on the dole for another six months. It would not matter if they went and did some inadequate small course—to use a phrase which I was not going to use—which really was not going to lead to any benefit to them directly or to me as an employer. It would not matter how long they sat there, I would not employ them.”

I was in the public gallery when he said that and it took all of my self control to stop myself from yelling out “Discriminator!” I knew I would have been bounced out of the gallery if I had have done that and rightly so. The use of a lack of social skills not to employ someone in any job, not just the ones that require it as mentioned, has to stop.

PART N: Any other related matters

It is here that I have to talk about the biggest enemy in my view to the Autistic community in Australia. The anti vaccine community. The people who claim that vaccines cause Autism. They are bound to be making submissions to this Committee and need to be put in their box appropriately. Their view is specifically mentioned in the petition previously noted as “hate speech”. As a result of this I have taken it upon myself to fight these horrible people. I take this accusation very personally. I know the Committee is well aware and accepts that the claim that vaccines cause Autism is not correct. It's a firm bipartisan position held by the ALP, the Liberal Party, the National Party and the Greens at the very least.

The obvious course to take with them if they put in submissions is to ignore them. I disagree, in the sense that they should be publicly put down and with back up as well. I mentioned in Part F in the section on justice about my ongoing search for legal options. One of them is a search to seek ways to punish the anti vaccine community for these pushes against vaccines. Not just about the false claim about Autism causation – I firmly believe that these people are either child neglectors (if they are refusing the vaccinate their own children for reasons other than established medical reasons) or inciters of child neglect. A lot of these people are parents of Autistics as well – children and adults. Their push that vaccines cause Autism is in fact causing them to neglect the real needs of their Autistic family member via a sheer lack of understanding of what they are really dealing with. That is scary.

The Family Court system is a Federal responsibility. Now I could have spoken of this in

Part M but to be honest this is something that I think requires no change to actual legislation. It simply needs enforcement. Parents who refuse to vaccinate their children for the reasons stated should be subject to child protection law and acted against. Should this happen those who incite it can be shut down automatically – at least in theory. There will be stubborn ones who will scream conspiracy and persist, but they will rapidly lose support as parents lose access to the children to other family members of the state of residence. I hate that second one because of its reputation for bad mental health results, but it has got to the point that parents who refuse to vaccinate are endangering the community. One only has to look at events in Samoa with the measles to know that it's true, on the back of minor outbreaks across Australia in recent times.

There is so much to tell, so much to correct and so much that needs to be done. I may well have missed things, and maybe the Spectrum Labor submission did as well. The Victorian Autism Inquiry identified one thing above all else. This is a complex matter with no simple solutions and no way to skip around it. It requires a commitment to equality, a commitment to flexibility and a commitment to community infrastructure within the Autistic community and in the general community on the basis of equality and tolerance. I want to help. Spectrum Labor wants to help as well. Don't sweep the Autistic community under the carpet in any way. The Spectrum Labor catchphrase as the Committee would have seen is "We are different, not less". I hold very firmly to this, and I have another saying which goes equally. "You have the right to be yourself, and no one can take that away from you". I am Autistic. I have a right to be me. At present there are too many restrictions and they have to be removed – not just for me, but for the whole Autistic community so we can take our rightful place as valued members of the community as a whole.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP GLUYAS