

University stands by anti-vaccine student

EXCLUSIVE

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AN anti-vaccine campaigner doing her PhD at University of Wollongong has maintained her candidature despite implying the family of a child who died from whooping cough were liars.

Judy Wilyman has also linked autism with vaccines and recently questioned the value of the vaccine Gardasil in the fight against cervical cancer.

The arts student's thesis, which she has been working on for more than four years, is titled "A critical analysis of the Australian government's rationale for its vaccination policy".

On her website, Vaccine Decisions, she updates "news" and shares her thoughts on the "plausible link" between autism and vaccines. She regards vaccine choice as a human rights issue.

Vice-chancellor Paul Wellington refused to comment on Ms Wilyman's ongoing candidature, but a university spokesman said the institution stood by Ms Wilyman because her personal views did not inform her work.

"Any 'conspiracy' theories she may have are independent of her relationship with the University of Wollongong. Her PhD has to meet the rigorous standards set by the university," he said.

Ms Wilyman recently issued a news update attacking Gardasil, which targets the human pap-

illomavirus, saying the "majority" of women in Australia were not at risk of cervical cancer.

The inventor of Gardasil, Ian Frazer, declined to comment on Ms Wilyman's thesis.

National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance deputy director Kristine Macartney took issue with the assumption some cervical cancer deaths were deemed to be "allowable".

"Not everybody gets every disease but these diseases are terrible and if we can prevent them, greatly reduce them or even eradicate them then of course that is the way to go," she said.

Ms Wilyman has tried to speak to a NSW couple, Toni and Dave McCaffery, who lost their four-week-old daughter, Dana, in 2009 to whooping cough, which she was too young to be vaccinated against.

In June this year Mr McCaffery released a statement begging anti-vaccine movement leader Meryl Dorey and Ms Wilyman to stop using his daughter's death for their own gain.

Ms Wilyman questioned whether the family had been paid to use their daughter's death to promote vaccines.

"I'm disappointed people can lie and misrepresent what my family does, which is to support the broader community so they don't suffer the way we did," Mr McCaffery said. "Our daughter means too much to us, and for an organisation like the university to be associated with Judy Wilyman — it's just wrong."

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