

Anti-vaccine group struggling for new ID

EXCLUSIVE

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THE Australian Vaccination Network, which promotes the "benefits" of measles and believes vaccines cause autism, has lost its first battle to find a new name.

The failed attempt came just days before legislation in NSW that bans parents from enrolling children in childcare centres if they can't provide immunisation records, or a legitimate exemption, took effect.

The NSW Department of Fair Trading last year ordered the anti-vaccine group to change its misleading name by next month.

The network lost a final appeal against the decision in November.

The Australian has identified a failed attempt by the organisation to "reserve" the name Australian Vaccination — Sceptics Network with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission.

In the wake of the failed attempt, other members of the public rushed to register the name as well as Australian Vaccination Sceptics.

Network president Greg

Beattie said he "did not care" whether the attempt at a new name provoked more attempts to expose the group as unscientific. "We have reserved the name but we haven't registered it," he said.

"We have to have a meeting first to find out what the members want to do and we are in the process of going through that at the moment.

"I don't really care if the sceptics have a problem with it... the AVN is a bit sceptical of vaccines. Actually, we are quite sceptical."

In her findings in the Administrative Decisions Tribunal in November, magistrate Nancy Hennessy said the group was not balanced.

Ken McLeod, one of the leaders of a group called Stop the Anti-Vaccination Network, said any use of the word "sceptics" in the organisation's new name would be dishonest. "We object to them using any variation of the term because sceptics gather evidence to make an informed choice. The AVN does nothing of the sort," he said. "If they went ahead with this, we would consider putting in a complaint to the Fair Trading Minister."

AVN members have mocked disease-related deaths of children and spruiked a herbal product called black salve as a cancer cure.

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