

Vital lifesaving medicines are being shelved by the Federal Government – just to keep the Budget in surplus

Organised by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia

- Medicines that are to be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in Australia go through a rigorous assessment of effectiveness and price versus benefit by the expert, independent Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).
- Until February this year, PBAC-recommended medicines with a financial impact of under \$10 million per year were almost invariably listed on the PBS, allowing Australian consumers affordable, subsidised access to these life-enhancing, and often life-saving, medications.
- **But now, whether consumers will have access to the best, affordable medicines is not being determined by experts, but by the 20 politicians who make up Federal Cabinet.** In February 2011, the Government decided that they would make the decisions about which new medicines will be placed on the PBS and when that will happen.
- Other than cost being a key factor, no information has been released about how Cabinet will make these important health decisions about what drugs are made available and what are held back.
- **Affordable medicines and vaccines that save and prolong lives are being denied to some of the most vulnerable chronically ill Australians by a short-sighted decision by the Government to disregard the recommendations of PBAC.** Consumers fear a backlog of medicines caught in the Cabinet process as more and more necessary medicines face indefinite deferral.
- This decision may actually end up costing tax payers more money because sick people may have to seek other, more expensive treatments, go into hospital for care and stop taking part in the workforce. **The PBS cannot be viewed only as a cost – it must be seen as a fundamental investment in the health of our nation.**
- **Australia can afford these new medicines NOW.** People with chronic illnesses should not have to suffer continued delays in access to medicines because of the Government's very short term budgetary goals.
- **Tell your MP this has to change. Demand action.**

As organisations representing and supporting health consumers, we call on the Federal Government to reverse this short-sighted decision and return to the process that has worked well and supported consumer access to the best available medicines for over 50 years.

