

Report

Consumer access to Pharmaceutical Benefits

Referral of inquiry

On 25 November 2009, the Senate referred the following matter to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 June 2010:

Consumer access to pharmaceutical benefits and the creation of new therapeutic groups through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), including:

- (a) The impact of new therapeutic groups on consumer access to existing PBS drugs, vaccines and future drugs, particularly high cost drugs;
- (b) The criteria and clinical evidence used to qualify drugs as interchangeable at a patient level;
- (c) The effect of new therapeutic groups on the number and size of patient contributions;
- (d) Consultation undertaken in the development of new therapeutic groups;
- (e) The impact of new therapeutic groups on the classification of medicines in F1 and F2 formularies;
- (f) The delay to price reductions associated with the price disclosure provisions due to take effect on 1 August 2009 and the reasons for the delay;
- (g) The process and timing of consideration by Cabinet of high cost drugs and vaccines; and
- (h) Any other related matters.

On 22 June 2010, the reporting date for the inquiry was extended to 26 August 2010.

Conduct of inquiry

In accordance with usual practice, the inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* and on the Internet inviting submissions by 31 March 2010. The committee also wrote directly to a number of organisations and individuals inviting submissions to the inquiry.

The committee received 34 submissions. During the inquiry, the committee also received additional information and answers to questions taken on notice. This documentation is listed on the committee's website.

The committee held a public hearing in Canberra on 7 May 2010. The Hansard transcript of this hearing is also available on the committee's website.

Conclusion

On 19 July 2010, the Governor-General prorogued the 42nd Parliament and dissolved the House of Representatives. After due consideration, the committee has determined that it is unable to provide a comprehensive report at this time. The committee will reconsider the issues of this inquiry in the event that it is re-referred to the committee in the new parliament.

Senator Rachel Siewert
Chair