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10/20

Ms Naomi Bleeser
Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bleeser

Inquiry into consumer access to pharmaceutical benefits

The AMA supports the independence and transparency of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listing and pricing functions through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). The AMA considers the PBAC plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the PBS subsidises safe, effective and affordable medicines. The PBAC must be allowed to make its recommendations to the Minister for Health and Ageing independently and free from political and sectional interests, on the basis of the evidence before it.

In respect of the Government's proposal to create three new therapeutic groups covering antidepressants and bisphosphonates, the critical question is whether the respective medications are pharmacologically equivalent and therefore interchangeable at the patient level. The AMA considers that the PBAC has the necessary expertise to consider the relevant evidence and make this determination.

The AMA is confident that the PBAC would have recommended the therapeutic groupings on the basis of the clinical evidence before it. If the companies that are affected by the Government's measure have new evidence that demonstrates their medications are not interchangeable with similar medications listed on the PBS, the AMA is of the view that this should be submitted to the PBAC for further consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Pesce
President

26 March 2010

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