



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH
MINISTER FOR SPORT**



Ref No: MC14-002913

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 17 March 2014 (ref. 881/1349) regarding a petition submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions, requesting Medicare eligibility for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) unit at Mount Gambier.

In 2012-13, the Australian Government invested more than \$248 million in patient rebates for MRI services. Over the last ten years the number of MRI services has increased by 250 per cent, from 250,000 services in 2002/03 to over 638,000 services in 2012/13, with an average yearly increase of approximately nine per cent per year.

As part of the *Magnetic Resonance Imaging Expansion* initiative my Department undertook three MRI expansion rounds to ensure ongoing affordable and convenient diagnostic imaging services for patients. This included the Area of Need Invitation to Apply (ITA 309/1112) process. There were a very large number of applications for the ITA process and only 12 Medicare eligible units could be awarded. Mount Gambier's application was unsuccessful in this process.

As you are aware, the Government has inherited an enormous debt, and policy priorities will be considered within this context, and any additional expenditure will be considered when it is responsible to do so. This would include any consideration of expanding Medicare eligibility for MRI units.

Thank you for bringing the petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

4/4/14
PETER DUTTON