



SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PENNY WONG
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Labor Senator for South Australia

Senator the Honourable Slade Brockman
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr President,

RE: ALTERATIONS TO THE HANSARD TRANSCRIPT

I write following questioning in the 2022-23 budget estimates hearing of the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee with the Department of Parliamentary Services on the morning of Monday 4 April 2022, relating to alterations to the Hansard transcript.

Odgers' Australian Senate Practice states at pages 108 and 109 of the fourteenth edition:

Soon after they deliver a speech, senators receive a draft of the transcript from Hansard. Senators may make necessary corrections to the transcript, but changes altering the sense or introducing new matters are not admissible. The President has control over requests for alterations to Hansard, although ultimate authority resides in the Senate. Following an incident in 1989 in which a minister was censured by the Senate for deleting words appearing in the Daily Hansard, the Senate resolved that the President should "enforce strictly the rule that senators' corrections to Hansard must not have the effect of deleting from the record words actually spoken in debate so as to alter the sense of words spoken". In a subsequent statement, the President informed the Senate of the procedures for dealing with requests for alterations to the transcript or to the Daily Hansard. The President had asked that "where there is any doubt as to whether the request comes within the established rules", the matter be referred to him. [Emphasis added]

Recognising the importance of ensuring the accuracy of the parliamentary record, I have raised this matter with you privately, and sought your assistance in ensuring that relevant officials of the Department of Parliamentary Services appear before the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee again today in order to adequately respond to questions about this matter.

Given there has been no agreement to do so, I now raise this matter with you formally.

There are established standards for the alteration and correction of the Hansard record, as well as for ministers who mislead the Parliament to correct the record. The attempt by Minister Hume (and Minister Sukkar in the House of Representatives) to make such a correction by altering the Hansard record is not an acceptable way to address such a matter.

Odgers makes clear your responsibility as President to ensure the Hansard rules regarding changes altering the sense or introducing new matters that are not admissible are strictly enforced. It is my expectation that you will examine the changes that have been made and take appropriate action.

Yours sincerely,

PENNY WONG

4 April 2022

Copy: Senator the Honourable Simon Birmingham
Leader of the Government in the Senate

Attachment: Original Hansard and revised text

ORIGINAL HANSARD

SENATOR HUME

**MINISTER FOR SUPERANNUATION, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE
DIGITAL ECONOMY AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY**

THE SENATE

WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH 2022

Schedule 7 to the Bill ensures all Australians continue to have the best access to the PBS, and that medicines continue to be affordable for all Australians. The amendment will reduce the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme general patient charge by \$10.00, from the current amount of \$42.50 to the new amount of \$32.50, commencing on 1 May 2022.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that all Australians are able to access high quality health care. The PBS provides significant direct assistance to

make medicines affordable. This includes the provision of access to subsidised medicines through the PBS.

This measure will provide a significant benefit to the affordability of the PBS listed medicines for general patients by reducing the general PBS co-payment.

General patients will pay no more than \$32.50 of out-of-pocket costs (excluding optional charges imposed by manufacturers).

This means that over 3 million Australians will pay less for their medicines each year, with close to 17 million scripts costing patients less.

The indexation arrangements for the general patient co-payment will continue according to the existing indexation arrangements. However, the indexation calculation will now work off a significantly reduced baseline of \$32.50, meaning that patients will continue to save for many years into the future.

The Government's commitment to ensuring that Australians can access affordable medicines, when they need them, remains a priority.

REVISED HANSARD

SENATOR HUME

**MINISTER FOR SUPERANNUATION, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE
DIGITAL ECONOMY AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY**

THE SENATE

WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH 2022

Schedule 7 to the Bill ensures all Australians continue to have the best access to the PBS, and that medicines continue to be affordable for all Australians. The amendment will reduce the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme general patient safety nets by \$85.00, from the current amount of \$1,542.10 to the new amount of \$1,457.10, commencing on 1 July 2022.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that all Australians are able to access high quality health care. The PBS provides significant direct assistance to make medicines affordable. This includes the provision of access to subsidised medicines through the PBS.

This measure will provide a significant benefit to the affordability of the PBS listed medicines for general patients by reducing the general PBS safety net thresholds.

General patients will pay no more than \$6.80 of out-of-pocket costs (excluding optional charges imposed by manufacturers) upon reaching the reduced safety net.

This means that around 3 million Australians will pay less for their medicines each year, with close to 2.5 million patients paying less.

The indexation arrangements for the general patient co-payment will continue according to the existing indexation arrangements. However, the indexation calculation will now work off a significantly reduced baseline of \$1,457.10, meaning that patients will continue to save for many years into the future.

The Government's commitment to ensuring that Australians can access affordable medicines, when they need them, remains a priority.