



**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin *Julie*

Thank you for your letter of 13 May 2010 regarding a petition submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions about the removal of Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items 50124 and 50125, which provide for joint aspirations or injections.

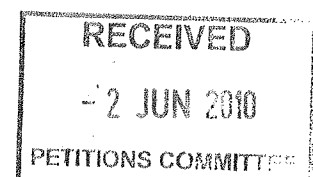
As part of the 2009-10 Budget, it was announced that the MBS fees for minor procedural items 50124 and 50125 would be removed from the MBS. However, there was no change to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme listings of medicines associated with joint injections.

The joint injection items have been removed from the MBS as they can be delivered as part of a standard consultation. There are many services carried out during a standard consultation with a doctor, such as performing a Pap smear, which do not attract a separately identified benefit. Following the change, any practitioner who was previously administering the service can continue to perform the service under the relevant attendance item for the relevant medical specialty.

The new MBS Quality Framework, a measure announced in the 2009-10 Budget, has seen the Australian Government allocate \$9.3 million over two years to develop and implement a new evidence-based framework for managing the MBS into the future. The Quality Framework introduced a new MBS listing process on 1 January 2010 that applies to all applications that do not undergo an assessment through the Medical Services Advisory Committee.

Items that are deemed eligible for MBS listing will be listed for a time-limited period and will require a formal evaluation at the end of the period.

My Department has met on a number of occasions with both Arthritis Australia and the Australian Rheumatology Association to discuss this issue.



On 31 January 2010, my Department received a submission from the rheumatologists regarding complex joint injections and aspirations. My Department has indicated that it is willing to examine further the issues raised. These services are now being reviewed under the new MBS Quality Framework.

I trust that the above information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

NICOLA ROXON