



SENATOR THE HON KIM CARR
MINISTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES

RECEIVED
28 JUN 2012
PETITIONS COMMITTEE

C12/3067

The Hon John Murphy MP
Member for Reid
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600


Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 May 2012 about a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions. The Petition requested an examination of the transition process to access concessional medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), when a dependent child turns 16 years of age.

The Department of Human Services (the department) writes to customers who are receiving Parenting Payment Single in the period leading up to the youngest child's 16th birthday. The letter advises that entitlement to the payment will cease and that the associated concession card will be cancelled.

The customer is invited to contact the department should they still require social security support. Depending on the date the customer contacts, transferring from one payment type to another can be backdated to ensure continuity of entitlements of their concession card and/or income support. Commonly, a customer on Parenting Payment Single will transfer to Newstart Allowance. When a person has primary caring responsibility for a dependent child they will also have access to a Pensioner Concession Card.

In the case of the customer being granted Newstart Allowance, a new concession card will be produced and mailed to the customer. Production and delivery of personalised concession cards can take up to 14 days. Where a customer has advised they urgently need access to concessional entitlements, the department can provide an interim voucher to the customer which can be used to confirm their eligibility for the concession.

There is a further safeguard to ensure that customers have access to the PBS while waiting for their card to arrive in the mail. A customer who pays the non-concessional rate for prescription medicines can take their receipts to any Service Centre offering Medicare services and claim a refund upon presentation of their Medicare card.

A check is made against the department's records, which are updated nightly on working days, to determine whether the customer is entitled to concessional rates when they make a claim for PBS.

The department considers that the current arrangements are satisfactory and that the processes in place to ensure a customer's continued access to their entitlements under these circumstances are adequate. If any customer needs further assistance, the department will discuss the options of other entitlements for which they may be eligible.

Yours sincerely

Kim Carr

26 JUN 2012