



**The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Human Services
Minister for Social Inclusion**

C11/6118

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair, Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 3 November 2011 to the Hon Nicola Roxon, Minister for Health and Ageing, about the petition received by the Standing Committee on Petitions requesting a Medicare office in the Narellan business district. Your letter was referred to me as the Medicare program is in my portfolio.

I appreciate the petition you have forwarded on behalf of residents from the electorate of Macarthur and I note their desire for closer access to Medicare face-to-face services. While the Government has no plans to extend the office network for the Department of Human Services at this time, my Department will continue to monitor demand for Centrelink and Medicare services at all locations around Australia, including in areas of high growth such as Narellan and the surrounding suburbs.

To accommodate the service needs of communities where there are no shopfronts for the Department of Human Services, the Government is investing in a variety of alternative programs to make it easier for Australians and their families to access Centrelink and Medicare services from the comfort and privacy of their own home.

For the Medicare program, a telephone service is now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the cost of a local call on 13 20 11. Customers speak directly to a person who can help them to lodge a claim, where the rebate is paid directly into the customer's bank account, or with any other Medicare business.

Customers can also claim their Medicare rebate directly at their doctor's practice, if the practice offers electronic claiming. This service is quick, easy and secure, and the Medicare rebate can be paid directly into the customer's bank account. I would encourage residents of the Macarthur electorate to ask their doctor about providing this service.

While I recognise that online claiming does not suit every customer's needs, Medicare benefits for some medical visits can also be claimed over the Internet 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the website www.humanservices.gov.au.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Plibersek

9.12.11