



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

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 31 October 2011 regarding the petition for Medicare funding for bone densitometry for Australian women at menopause.

As you may know, currently Medicare benefits are payable for bone densitometry for:

- the diagnosis and monitoring of bone loss if a patient has certain specific medical conditions or is undergoing particular treatments likely to cause rapid bone loss;
- the confirmation of clinically suspected low bone mineral density, usually following a fracture;
- the monitoring of established low bone mineral density; and
- those patients over the age of 70 years.

It is the Australian Government's aim that services listed in the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS), including bone densitometry, should reflect and encourage appropriate medical practice based on the best available evidence.

For any medical service to be reimbursed through the MBS, the Government requires that it first be assessed and found to be safe, effective and to provide value-for-money, both for patients and tax payers. In deciding what medical services to support through Medicare, the Government relies on the expert advice of the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC).

An application has been made to MSAC for bone densitometry for menopausal women over the age of 50 years and it is progressing through the MSAC process. New tests are assessed by expert committees composed of consumer representatives, health economists, health administrators, clinical experts in pathology, surgery, specialist medicine and general practice as well as health technology assessment professionals. Information on MSAC processes and the contact details for MSAC can be obtained on its website at [www.msac.gov.au](http://www.msac.gov.au)

I assure you that decisions to cover services under Medicare and the conditions attached to those services are based on thorough and well considered processes that aim to provide quality and accessible health services for all Australians.

I trust that the above information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

**NICOLA ROXON**

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