



730/1172



**The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for Health**

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

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 26 November 2012 regarding a petition requesting funds for clinical research into Parkinson's disease and the development of medication and treatment to improve the quality of life for Australians with Parkinson's disease.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is the Australian Government's peak funding body for health and medical research. NHMRC invests in research through a variety of funding mechanisms including investigator-initiated research projects and clinical trials, broad programs of research, training awards for scholars and postdoctoral fellows, career research fellowships and special strategic research programs.

In the period 2001-2012, NHMRC has provided \$62.8 million to fund 362 grants for research into Parkinson's disease. This has included annual funding of over \$7 million a year for each of the past five years. Given this, we can expect that research into Parkinson's disease will continue to attract substantial Commonwealth funding.

The Commonwealth also provides extensive assistance for medications for, and the treatment of, Parkinson's disease.

In 2011-12 over \$51 million was spent on medications used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This Scheme provides access to a wide range of medicines for all Australians, at a substantially subsidised rate.

There are a range of Medicare items that support people with chronic and complex health needs, including those living with Parkinson's disease, and provide remuneration for medical practitioners, including GPs, to spend more time with their patients. These include items for health assessments, medication management, case conferencing, chronic disease management and time-based GP consultations which yield higher rebates for longer consultations.

As the petition highlights, Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurological condition in Australia. It is complex, disabling and costly for those who suffer from it, and is difficult for their carers and families. I hope this information illustrates the extent to which the Commonwealth is providing assistance to Australians with Parkinson's disease and how it is aiming to reduce their medication and treatment costs. In addition, substantial research funding is being provided to develop a better understanding of this condition, and new and better ways to treat and manage it.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

**Tanya Plibersek**

15.12.12