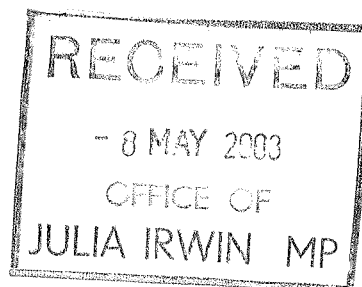




**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mrs Irwin

Julia

Thank you for your letter of 17 March 2008 referring the petition about treatment for mesothelioma sufferers through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Medicines are listed on the PBS on the advice of an independent, expert advisory body known as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) which is made up of doctors, other health professionals and a consumer representative. The PBAC considers applications from companies for PBS listing having regard to the medicine's clinical effectiveness and value for money compared with other available treatments.

I am pleased to advise that at its November 2007 meeting, the PBAC recommended the listing of the drug ALIMTA[®] (pemetrexed disodium) be extended for the treatment of malignant pleural mesothelioma. ALIMTA was PBS-listed on 1 January 2008 for the treatment of patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma.

On 1 February 2008, the PBS listing restriction for ALIMTA was changed to include the treatment of all forms of malignant mesothelioma. This change was made because of the difficulty in establishing whether a tumour located outside the pleural region actually originated from within the pleural region, which could have denied access to patients who should have qualified for PBS subsidy.

I trust that the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

NICOLA ROXON

29 APR 2008