

Hon Lea Stevens MP

Minister for Health
Minister Assisting the
Premier in Social Inclusion

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Mr Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Australian Senate Community Affairs
Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Humphery

Thank you for your letter of 6 October 2005 concerning the National Health Amendment (Budget Measures – Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005, and Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2005.

In respect of the National Health Amendment (Budget Measures – Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005, I note that the Bill varies Safety Net arrangements and introduces a ruling that medicines dispensed within 20 days of previous supply are not eligible for inclusion in the Safety Net.

I also note that there is a mechanism in place, through the involvement of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, to ensure that conditions and restrictions are based on best available evidence.

The Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2005, in relation to pharmaceuticals, varies the date of the current rules for provision of approvals to community pharmacists to supply PBS medicines from 31 December 2005 until 30 June 2006. I note that this will allow the government more time to consider the review of the existing pharmacy location rules, and the role of the Australian Community Pharmacy Authority, and I support this move.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lea Stevens'.

HON LEA STEVENS MP
Minister for Health
Minister Assisting the Premier in Social Inclusion