

6 February 2009

Ms Christine McDonald
Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms McDonald

I am writing to you to express my deep concern for the omission of health and disability care infrastructure spending in the Government's economic stimulus package announced this week. As the bills relating to the package have been referred to your Committee, the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) would like to provide the following submission.

The Muscular Dystrophy community is one of many disadvantaged sectors that have been neglected by the Government in the \$42 billion package announced this week. This is really rubbing salt into the wound.

Simply because the number of people affected by Muscular Dystrophy is not as large for some other conditions, this devastating disorder has not been designated as a National Health Priority Area (cancer control, injury prevention and control, cardiovascular health, diabetes mellitus, mental health, asthma and arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions).

While there is no doubt that a large segment of the community is affected by with these conditions, this policy has the effect of dividing those in need of health care into winners and losers. Regrettably other sectors of the community follow the government lead which further accentuates the problem. We consider it is unfair that these sectors be accorded special treatment to the virtual exclusion of other areas such as MD, particularly when the need is so great.

The economic stimulus package provides an opportunity to rectify the omissions of the past. In so doing, the expenditure would not only provide an economic stimulus today but it would also be an investment towards reducing health care costs for the future.

The immediate needs in relation to the MDA are clearly outlined in the recently published Access Economics Report titled *The Cost of Muscular Dystrophy*. Muscular Dystrophy alone affects 1 in every 1,000 Australians, with a total cost of \$6 billion per annum to care for their needs. We believe that this report alone warrants further discussion on health care expenditure before the current package is authorized.



MUSCULAR
DYSTROPHY

PO Box 2200
North Melbourne 3051
Australia

111 Boundary Road
North Melbourne 3051
Australia

Tel. 61 3 9320 9555
Fax. 61 3 9320 9595
Email Info@mda.org.au

ABN & DGR 33 376 893 530
Reg. A1497Z

"Home of MDA"
www.mda.org.au

"Camp MDA"
www.campMDA.org

Muscular Dystrophy
Research Foundation
www.mdrf.net

National Muscular Dystrophy
Centre
www.nmdrc.org

"Melbourne's Delights"
www.MelbournesDelights.org

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY ASSOCIATION

means... *Hope*

Should additional funding be factored in, it would make an enormous difference to the quality of life of those people affected by the devastating disorder being Muscular Dystrophy and their families throughout Australia.

On behalf of the MDA, I am asking your Committee to consider rejecting part of the package and recommending that the government rethink its approach with a view to including funding for MDA and disability services nationwide in the Government stimulus package. In this way a fairer expenditure of taxpayers' funds would be achieved while still meeting the overall objectives of the package. If we are going to improve Australia, let the Government improve it for everyone, including those who have been neglected in the past.

The Access Economics Report on the Cost of Muscular Dystrophy is available for reference on our website. A background paper on Muscular Dystrophy is attached.

Yours Sincerely,



Boris M Struk
Executive Director – MDA

Director
National Muscular Dystrophy Research Centre



PO Box 2200
North Melbourne 3051
Australia

111 Boundary Road
North Melbourne 3051
Australia

Tel. 61 3 9320 9555
Fax. 61 3 9320 9595
Email Info@mda.org.au

ABN & DGR 33 376 893 530
Reg. A1497Z

"Home of MDA"
www.mda.org.au

"Camp MDA"
www.campMDA.org

Muscular Dystrophy
Research Foundation
www.mdrf.net

National Muscular Dystrophy
Centre
www.nmdrc.org

"Melbourne's Delights"
www.MelbournesDelights.org