



**Palliative
Care
Australia**

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14 July 2008

Mr Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

by email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Elton

Inquiry into National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical and Other Benefits – Cost Recovery) Bill 2008

Palliative Care Australia, the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life for all, thanks you for the opportunity to make this submission to the inquiry into the proposed *National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical and Other Benefits – Cost Recovery) Bill 2008*.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) plays a critical role in making access to pharmaceutical medicines, and thus access to a key element of quality health care, affordable for all Australians.

It is only in recent years that the PBS has had a section dedicated to medicines approved for palliative medicine indications. Medicines that have a comparative efficacy and cost-effectiveness for palliative purposes are likely to also have other comparatively efficacious and cost-effective indications, with in most cases a larger target market.

Palliative medicines, and palliative care, have some important differences from many other medicines and types of health care, in that their purpose is fundamentally not to seek a cure, but to seek relief from pain and other symptoms associated with terminal conditions.

Given that palliative medicines comprise a relatively limited market, we believe that there are already disincentives on pharmaceutical companies from engaging in research into palliative medicines, or to add to the already significant cost burdens by seeking a specific PBS listing for the palliative indications for medicines.

PCA would be extremely concerned if this proposal jeopardised the provision of medicines supporting end of life care for many Australians by creating a further impediment to their availability under the palliative medicines section of the PBS.

We ask the committee to recommend to the Government that either this proposed charge be dropped, or that effective measures be implemented to ensure that there is no additional disincentive to the listing of palliative medicines on the PBS.

Palliative Care Australia would welcome the opportunity to discuss the ramifications of this proposal in more depth with committee members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bruce Shaw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Bruce Shaw
National Policy Director