



24 September 2013

Dr Brendan Shaw  
Chief Executive Officer  
Medicines Australia  
Level 1, 16 Napier Close  
Deakin, ACT, 2600, Australia

Dear Brendan,

**Submission to Oncology Industry Task Force Report**

Australian cancer patients and their families need reassurance that they can continue to receive access to safe and effective cancer drugs.

On that basis we welcome the Medicines Australia Report.

It must be acknowledged that Australia, for over 50 years has pioneered a system to ensure that people could afford vital but expensive medicines regardless of the level of their income. This is provided through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) process and funded by the Federal Government.

However, the medical environment is rapidly changing and this poses significant issues for Governments as they review Health Technology Assessments and evidence to support new discoveries and opportunities to provide these new treatments to cancer patients.

More than 287,000 people are living with cancer (AIHW – 2006). This will only increase and processes for the timely adoption of new and important treatments must be recognised.

Australia is a 'minnow' in the world oncology environment, but we have an enviable record in high quality research and clinical trials. This has been demonstrated in the Clinical Trials Action Group Report 2011. As such industry, clinicians and cancer consumers collaborate -

- To provide people affected by cancer with access to the latest and best treatments available
- Assist in evaluating clinical effectiveness, safety and cost-effectiveness ('value for money') compared with other treatments through the development of appropriate clinical trials

But for many cancers there are no other treatments – so there must be a mechanism to determine how is this factor judged? These are important questions that cancer consumers continually ask.

Others are –

1. More and more research and reliance on bio-logical compounds for the treatment of cancer
2. A transparent process to recognise this factor
3. Targeted cancer therapies also hold the promise of being more selective for cancer cells than normal cells thereby reducing side effects, and improving quality of life.
4. Acceptance by Governments that for some rare cancers, there is no alternative treatment
5. Does cancer receive significant funding relative of burden of disease

Without full engagement of all stakeholders these important questions will never be answered. This report may be the cornerstone for some answers and we welcome the opportunity to remain engaged in any future initiatives that provide better access to appropriate cancer treatments and better outcomes for cancer patients

CanSpeak is a national network of consumers and consumer organisations representing the views and perspectives of a broad range of people and the community affected by cancer. This network of peak member organisations provides greater capacity to work independently, and together, to influence policy, research and health services to improve outcomes for people affected by cancer.

Yours sincerely



John Stubbs  
Chief Executive Officer