

Cancer Voices Australia: Comment to Oncology Taskforce (Medicines Australia)

Access to cancer medicines in Australia: Deloitte Access Economics, July 2013

Cancer Voices Australia is the independent, volunteer voice of people affected by cancer – since 2000. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the recent report “*Access to cancer medicines in Australia*”.

Cancer Voices welcomes the wider debate about how Australia may improve access to necessary, evidence-based cancer medicines, in a cost effective way. We regret that we were not consulted by the Oncology Taskforce; only one well-recognised consumer organisation having contributed - an omission recognised subsequently by the Taskforce.

Cancer Voices would like to see a rationalisation of the Australian approvals process – TGA, PBAC and MSAC – with a view to accelerating approvals, using parallel mechanisms and awareness of co-dependent technologies. We also recommend examination of how overseas approval processes might be accredited to assist in reducing delays for access to some cancer drugs. We are very interested in the development of and access to targeted therapies which may require a slightly different approach for approvals.

Post marketing surveillance with outcomes monitoring should be undertaken, especially for very high cost oncology medicines. We now know the early promise shown in clinical trials with very carefully controlled eligibility criteria may not stack up under wider use.

Cancer Voices would also like to see greater consultation of community and consumer organisations in the decision-making processes of health technology assessment agencies. We would welcome a public debate on how best to enable access to high-cost medicines.

While we in Cancer Voices are all present or past cancer patients, we are also taxpayers, and are conscious of the often competing claims on the public purse. We are concerned by the high prices requested by pharmaceutical companies for new cancer medicines that may not be always justified by their added therapeutic value. The high prices currently sought also contribute to slowing PBAC processes and decrease access for Australians.

We highly value access to new cancer medicines but also value access which is equitable and cost effective, as currently aimed for by the Australian Government and its processes.

Cancer Voices Australia is the independent, 100% volunteer voice of people affected by cancer, working to improve the cancer experience for Australians, their families and friends. We are active in the areas around diagnosis, information, treatment, research, support, care, survivorship and policy.
To achieve this we work with decision-makers, ensuring the patient perspective is heard.

Cancer Voices has led the cancer consumer movement in Australia since 2000. Its network shares objectives and works together on national issues identified as important by members, with consumers working to help others affected by cancer.

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