



Media Release
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Government gets it right – finally.

Today's announcement by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Health and Aging regarding the listing of a number of medications on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is welcomed by the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc.

Australia has enjoyed a transparent, stable and cost effective system for the approval and provision of medications for many years.

We hope that this announcement marks a move back to that system.

Whilst it has meant that people with schizophrenia have had to wait an additional eight months for access to Sustenna on the PBS, it is wonderful that sanity has finally prevailed.

We know with certainty that this medication will not help everyone with schizophrenia.

We know from the research and directly from people with schizophrenia who have been lucky enough to have access to it that it will assist some and for some it will change their lives.

Having said that, the advantages of this medication over its primary comparator are such that any delay is puzzling.

This is a medication that only requires 13 injections a year, has less side effects than its comparators, can be administered in the arm rather than the demeaning process of having an injection in the backside, and that has higher efficacy than its major comparator as there is no cold chain issue (therefore a potential reduction in efficacy).

In the vexed area of mental illness there seem to be no magic bullets, therefore it is essential that the broadest range of medications be available as each seems to have great impact for a group of people.

Mental illness has finally been recognized as an area of great need and been adopted by all political parties as a major policy area.

It is acknowledged that one in every five Australians will experience a mental illness that requires intervention.

It is acknowledged that almost half of the 800,000 Australians receiving a disability support benefit have a psychiatric disability.

International research and evidence clearly demonstrates that with access to good medical treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation programs, recovery and meaningful activity including paid employment is not only possible but a likely outcome.

It is our fervent hope that people with a mental illness will not again have to wait for a medication which may help them in their recovery, which is surely the wish of Government as well.

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