



Andrew Wilkie MP
INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR DENISON

24 JUL 2018

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Greg

I refer to your response to my request for the listing of meningococcal vaccinations for the A, B, C, Y and W strains on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

To be blunt, I am beyond disappointed – I am disgusted.

In no way do you provide an adequate response. Instead you show that you do not understand, or address, the community's frustration in the Government's lack of action. What I see is political spin in a craven attempt to paint a rosy picture when the reality is the exact opposite.

I am sorry but you are totally out of touch with the public's expectations on this issue and that is reflected in your rubbish response. Your existing policy favours only a small section of the community and those who are wealthy enough to afford the vaccinations. However most children and all adults - and that is the vast majority of Australians - remain at significant risk.

Another case of meningococcal B has been diagnosed in Hobart since you wrote to me. You must act now. The community simply won't tolerate a Government that hides behind excuses, obfuscation and double-speak. Neither will I.

You must move immediately for the listing of both the meningococcal B and ACWY vaccine on the PBS for all Australians of all ages.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wilkie MP
Independent Member for Denison

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**The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health**

Ref No: MC18-016441

Mr Andrew Wilkie MP
Member for Denison
GPO Box 32
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Mr Wilkie

I refer to your letter of 18 July 2018 concerning access to vaccines for the prevention of meningococcal disease.

I was terribly saddened to learn of the recent death of a young woman in Tasmania due to meningococcal disease and I would like to reassure you that the Turnbull Government is a great supporter of immunisation as a critical public health measure preventing infectious diseases in Australia.

This is why the Turnbull Government quickly responded to the advice of clinical experts by implementing a quadrivalent meningococcal vaccination program protecting infants 12 months of age against serogroups A, C W, and Y from July 2018. This complements the broader range of free vaccinations available for eligible Australians on the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

You will also be pleased to know that my Department is working closely with vaccine manufacturers to implement a quadrivalent meningococcal vaccination program protecting adolescents aged 15-16 years against serogroups A, C W, and Y following a recommendation in March 2018 from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) to do so.

Under the *National Health Act 1953*, the Government is not able to include a new medicine on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) or vaccine on the NIP unless it has first been recommended by the independent PBAC. The Committee is by law and in practice, independent of Government in its deliberations.

To date the PBAC has not recommended the listing of the meningococcal B vaccine Bexsero® on the NIP.

The Australian Government is following closely the ongoing clinical study in South Australia, which is addressing the previous findings of the PBAC by building upon the available evidence about the impacts of meningococcal B vaccination on carriage in adolescents and herd immunity in the broader community.

The results of the study may provide additional evidence of the clinical effectiveness of the meningococcal B vaccine, which may then be used by the vaccines sponsor,

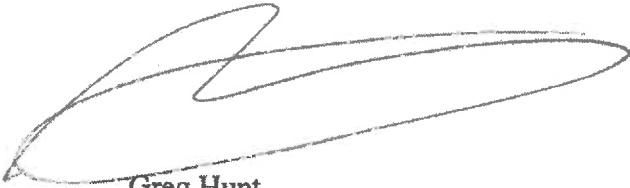
GlaxoSmithKline, in any future submission to PBAC for the listing of Bexsero® on the NIP. In this context I have urged GlaxoSmithKline to resubmit to the PBAC at the earliest opportunity once they are able to address the previous findings of the PBAC.

It is important to note that the Turnbull Government has a policy guarantee to list every medicine on the PBS or NIP following a recommendation to do so from the expert PBAC. Should the PBAC recommend that further vaccines be made available for for the prevention of meningococcal disease, including Bexsero®, we will list it as a matter of priority.

You may be interested to note that the Turnbull Government approach to new medicines and Vaccines differs significantly from the former Labor Government which adopted the policy to defer and delay access to new medicines that had been recommended by the independent PBAC. The 2011 budget papers refer to the decision of the Labor Government in 2011; "the listing of some medicines would be deferred until fiscal circumstances permit"¹.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Greg Hunt

Regards,
Greg

¹ [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/2011-12_Health_PBS_sup1/\\$File/2011-12_Health_PBS_08_Outcome2.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/2011-12_Health_PBS_sup1/$File/2011-12_Health_PBS_08_Outcome2.pdf) - Page 121.



Andrew Wilkie MP
INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR DENISON

18 JUL 2018

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister *Greg*

I am deeply concerned that a young woman died recently from meningococcal disease in Tasmania. Moreover I understand the State has an abnormally high incidence of the terrible disease and there have been numerous cases in the last 12 months in a population of only about 500,000 people.

As you would be aware meningococcal vaccines are not universally listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and the cost is prohibitive for many people. I ask you to consider placing the vaccines on the PBS as a matter of urgency before more young lives are avoidably lost to this dreadful disease.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wilkie MP
Independent Member for Denison