



**The Hon Greg Hunt MP**  
**Minister for Health**  
**Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the**  
**Public Service and Cabinet**

Ref No: MC19-016569

Ms Olivia Collard  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006



30 OCT 2019

Dear Ms Collard

*Olivia*

I refer to your letter of 8 October 2019 concerning the coronial investigation into the death of Mr David Sheppard in May 2017. In particular, the Coroner's recommendation that "the Department of Health review PBS regulations to consider whether actions can be undertaken to streamline the process of obtaining authority prescriptions for imatinib mesylate so that patients with leukaemia can be treated expeditiously and optimally, whether treatment is considered potentially curative or otherwise".

I can report that at its August 2017 meeting, the PBAC recommended that the authority restriction level of all current imatinib PBS listings for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) and chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML) be changed from Authority Required (written) to Authority Required (telephone) for initial treatment applications.

The PBAC made this recommendation on the basis that it considered the risk of use outside the restrictions was now low. The PBAC also considered that a decrease in the authority level of these listings would benefit patients requiring urgent treatment and ease the burden on prescribers. The PBAC outcome statement from this meeting has been published on: [www.pbs.gov.au](http://www.pbs.gov.au).

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) is required to consider both clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness when making recommendations to list a medicine on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The PBAC recommends restrictions to access when making a recommendation to list a medicine on the PBS. The restriction level assists in ensuring that the medicine is only prescribed for the group of patients for which it has been found to be clinically safe, effective and cost-effective.

The changes to the PBS restriction levels of imatinib for treatment of ALL and CML (chronic phase) were implemented on 1 September 2019. The PBS restriction level changes for imatinib for treatment of CML in the accelerated and blast phases are outstanding and will be implemented by my Department as soon as possible.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

  
Greg Hunt