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MO: H/05/04194

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 5 December 2005, enclosing petition number 602-05, regarding the effects of Myodil and other oil based and water contrast dyes and seeking costs of medical treatment and compensation.

There are many known causes of arachnoiditis, including infection, trauma, previous spinal surgery and intervertebral disc disease. One of the recognised causes is the previous administration of radiographic contrast media, in particular those that contained iophendylate. Myelography-induced arachnoiditis has become rare with the abandonment of this type of contrast media. Iophendylate's association with subsequent arachnoiditis is well recognised in the medical literature and was a documented potential risk in the prescriber information for these dyes, at least during the latter period of their use. Around the time that these products were withdrawn in the late 1980s, newer and improved methods of spinal imagery were coming into use, and different contrast media that posed a much lower risk of secondary arachnoiditis had also been introduced.

Any inquiry into the approval and marketing of iophendylate containing contrast media in Australia during its period of use is a Commonwealth matter, as the Commonwealth is responsible for the registration of such agents, both now and when these products were in use. The technologies that now exist for spinal imaging were not available at the time. It is likely that these dyes were considered to be the most suitable at the time of their introduction.

I am advised that a public inquiry into a practice that has now been superseded by new safer technology could not be justified as it would not produce further information which could benefit persons suffering from this condition.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Dr Gerard Neville, Senior Medical Officer, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone (07) 3234 1276.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP