



The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Health

Ms Joanne Matthews
President
Reflux Infants Support Association Inc
PO Box 1598
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006

Dear Ms Matthews

Thank you for your recent letters to the Secretary of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), Ms Sue Swensson, and me, regarding changes to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) restrictions for prescribing infant formula items.

Thank you also for forwarding a copy of an online petition in relation to these changes.

I would like to assure you that children who clinically require the infant formula items will continue to receive them through the PBS. The revised restrictions are changes to how these medicines are prescribed, not who is eligible.

Paediatricians and GPs may continue to prescribe amino acid formulae for children up to the age of 24 months in conditions now described as "*cow's milk protein enteropathy with combined intolerance to both soy protein and protein hydrolysate formulae*" and "*severe cow's milk protein enteropathy with failure to thrive*" so long as the child has been assessed or has an appointment with the relevant specialist.

As you are aware, in considering PBS listings, I rely on the independent and expert advice of the PBAC. The revised PBS restrictions for specialised infant formula items were introduced based on the recommendations of the PBAC. In recommending these changes, the PBAC sought comment from the sponsors of the affected products, as well as from expert groups including the Nutritional Products Working Party and the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy.

I acknowledge your Association's concerns and appreciate its point of view. However, as the amended restrictions were only introduced on 1 July 2012, I believe that it would be premature to review the new arrangements at this point.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tanya Plibersek', written in a cursive style.

Tanya Plibersek

21.11.12