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The voice of people
affected by cancer

Dear Sir or Madam

Thankyou for the invitation to provide comment on the **TGA Transparency Review**.

Consumer Medicine Information

An immediate area of interest for us is the TGA's role in facilitating health consumer access to Consumer Medicine Information (CMI). We are appreciative that the TGA has become the clearing house for CMIs for prescription medicines, a situation for which we ourselves advocated.

Cancer Voices NSW and other health consumer groups have major concerns about the difficulty of accessing CMIs, since they are no longer delivered with the product they describe. We attach our Position Statement on the problem.

We ask that the Review considers recommending that the TGA promote the existence of its website listing of CMIs more vigorously. Unfortunately very few members of the public would be aware that this is currently the main source for information about their medicines.

We also ask if the TGA is able to, and could, require pharmaceutical companies to include CMIs with medicines as they previously did. We are aware that some (eg Novartis) still do this, which consumers really appreciate.

Information about complementary medicines

Secondly, we wish to raise the issue of a more rigorous and transparent process for the listing of, and information about, complementary medicines. Cancer patients are known to be big consumers of these. Under the current arrangements, they can find little information about evidence to support their use and/ or product claims. We are aware that becoming 'listed' is a relatively simple matter, which is unlikely to either protect the consumer or assess the efficacy of the product.

Lastly, we suggest that the TGA considers how best to enable the consideration of those drugs which do not have a commercial proponent. This may require a public interest fund, as we are aware that the cost of the TGA's approving products is met by their manufacturers.

Consumer Involvement

We congratulate the TGA on becoming more aware of the value of consumer engagement in recent years. We are a member of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia and support their wider comments on the Transparency Review.

Yours sincerely

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

SALLY CROSSING AM
Chair, 17 January 2011