



Speech by

**KAREN STRUTHERS**

**MEMBER FOR ARCHERFIELD**

---

Hansard 23 November 1999

### PHARMACEUTICAL COSTS

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Archerfield—ALP) (10.18 a.m.): This morning I called in to visit a friend of mine who has a chronic illness. He and his wife are worried that the pain-killers prescribed by his general practitioner increased in price last month by 25%. The tablets are not on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme list and, as aged pensioners, this price hike hits them hard.

On 16 October this year, his wife bought 100 tablets packaged in two boxes for \$29. Two weeks later, 100 tablets costs \$36.65. This time they were packaged in five boxes. There is no extra or better product in these five boxes; the boxes are full of air, similar to a packet of potato chips.

I rang the dispensing pharmacist to find out why my friends are paying more. He explained that Federal Government health authorities have directed pharmaceutical companies to package the drug in lots of 20 tablets, not 50, due to the addictive nature of the drug. That seems fair enough, but why does the drug company then whack the price up by 25%? Do three cardboard boxes really cost \$8 extra?

Federal health authorities need to take greater control over the cost of pharmaceuticals to stop this type of unjustified slug on pensioners and other consumers. \$8 may be chicken feed to drug companies, but it is food on the table for my friends.

---