



Speech by

CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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GLIVEC

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (10.18 a.m.): I would like to draw the attention of the House to the plight of people who have been cast aside by a decision of the federal government. The people of Australia deserve the best doctors and the best drug therapy methods available and I find it hard to understand how the federal government can justify not including the new drug Glivec in the patient benefit scheme. Patients suffering from chronic myeloid leukaemia have been trialling Glivec and evidence suggests the drug has great potential. The USA Federal Drug Administration—FDA—has allocated this drug priority status and Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration has also given Glivec priority review. It was approved in August.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee is responsible for recommending to the federal health minister the drugs which should be listed on the patient subsidy scheme and obviously does not share the FDA's view. Equally importantly, it would appear the federal Health Minister does not know, or if she does then she does not care.

Those with chronic CML who have sufficient funds to buy the Glivec themselves have a better life than those who cannot. Those who cannot must endure until their disease has progressed to the accelerated or blast stage before they can access it via the patient benefit scheme. If this scenario is allowed to continue, then to have a better quality of life and a better chance of surviving CML, some may even have to sell their only asset, their family home. Some of my constituents or their relatives will never have the \$4,000 a month it costs to prolong their life or improve its quality.

This federal government cares only about money; it does not care about people. It has no compassion. All it seems to care about is the bottom line—the dollars. The withdrawal of this drug from patients on the trial has condemned a number of my constituents to a life of misery and I call on the member for Kennedy, Bob Katter, to lobby the federal Health Minister, Kay Patterson, to remedy this situation immediately. It is absolutely unAustralian and an obscenity to discriminate against the less well off in this way and to ask them to pay \$4,000 per month when some of them are pensioners. No-one can afford that sort of money, least of all the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society—our old-age pensioners. They deserve better.

Time expired.
