



Speech by

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**ONLINE PRESCRIPTIONS; PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME**

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algeester—ALP) (6.55 p.m.): Consumers beware of online advertisements flogging cheap pharmaceuticals. I received an email offering—

Wholesale Prescription Medications!

Our doctors will write you a prescription for free!

Get your Prescription Meds On Line.

**Mr Malone:** Viagra?

**Ms STRUTHERS:** It continues—

Meds like: Adipex, Celebrex, Valtrex, Zyban, and many, many others.

Meds for: Weight loss, pain relief, muscle pain relief, women's health, men's health, impotence, allergy relief, heartburn relief, migraine relief and MORE!

No prior prescription required—lowest prices possible.

Upon approval our US licensed doctors will prescribe your medication for free and have the medication shipped overnight to your door.

You'll get the absolute best value and service on the Internet.

Find out how here!

That is very tempting in this climate where health costs under the Howard government are rocketing and the costs of pharmaceuticals are rocketing well beyond the reach of average families. I smelt a rat when I saw this ad and contacted Queensland Health through the minister's office and received very good support. Thanks, Minister. My investigations into it revealed that in Australia consumers cannot import any prescription medicine without a valid prescription from a doctor registered in an Australian state or territory. So, member for Mirani, if you want your Viagra you will have to go to a doctor here. You cannot go online, even though this offer sounds pretty good.

This legislation, however, puts the onus on the consumer. It is an offence for the consumer to take this action and use the illegal prescription rather than the onus being on the sellers online. So my message is that consumers need to be very cautious in dealing with or responding to these sorts of messages online. Any medication coming into Australia via mail must have an attached medication declaration form filled out with it. This enables Customs to allow it in or seize it if it is a prohibited item. The risk to consumers is that they may pay online with a credit card but never see their bottle of Viagra or Serapax or Zyban or whatever. As I said, I referred this ad to Queensland Health and was given very helpful advice. Also, the Queensland Health officer responsible is forwarding the ad to the Therapeutic Goods Administration for its attention and the attention of the ACCC, because it has an international consumers protection enforcement network that may deal with this and investigate it further.

On a related matter, Australians should be, and many are, very concerned about the PBS scheme in this country and the current free trade agreement negotiations with the US. We need to be very careful about what is happening with the free trade agreements in relation to the PBS being thrown in the melting pot with these negotiations. Tony Abbott assured the Australian people that it would not be part of the free trade agreement but, interestingly, at the same time, Robert Zoellick, the US trade representative, was briefing reporters at the APEC conference in Bangkok where he said—

But we have other issues dealing with some of the questions of the PBS.

Time expired.