



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Ageing**

Ms Lynda Saltarelli  
Aged Care Crisis Team

Dear Ms Saltarelli

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 August 2012 to the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Hon Mark Butler MP, regarding the use of antipsychotic medicines. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting people with dementia and their families. This includes a range of initiatives to assist with the care of people with dementia with challenging behaviours. On 28 August 2012, Minister Butler held a roundtable discussion with leading health professionals and researchers to discuss medication and behaviour management of dementia in aged care, which included a particular focus on the use of antipsychotic medicines. A number of positive options to improve care for people with dementia were raised at the meeting. Work to explore these options is occurring over the coming weeks.

As you may be aware, in April this year the Government announced the aged care reform package. More information is available at [www.livinglongerlivingbetter.gov.au](http://www.livinglongerlivingbetter.gov.au). Through this package, the Government will provide \$268.4 million over five years to tackle dementia. This includes \$41.3 million over five years to support GPs to make a more timely diagnosis of dementia and expand the scope of Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Services to support more people with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

Also as part of the reform package, on 10 August 2012, the Australian Government proposed to all state and territory Health Ministers that dementia be recognised as the ninth National Health Priority Area. This recommendation was approved and will contribute to current and future work being undertaken to tackle dementia.

I also note your comments regarding funding of aged care homes. As you may be aware, the Aged Care Funding Instrument Review Program has been actively auditing residential aged care funding claims since February 2009. This program aims to undertake 20,000 reviews of claims annually. Overall, the national downgrade rate in 2011 was 18 per cent, compared to 16 per cent of all reviews in 2009.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell de Burgh'.

Russell de Burgh  
Assistant Secretary

28 September 2012