

**EMBARGOED: FRIDAY 17 AUGUST 2018**

## **Government today poised to consider innovative access solutions for cancer treatments**

MSD Australia welcomes the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee's (PBAC) consideration of proposals to subsidise immuno-oncology (IO) medicines across multiple tumour types for Australian cancer patients at a Special Meeting being held today.

"The PBAC Special Meeting is in response to the Federal Health Minister, The Hon Greg Hunt MP, request to work with industry and cancer patient advocacy groups towards a new approach for the subsidy of IO medicines across multiple tumour types," said Mr Michael Azrak, Managing Director of MSD Australia.

"As an outcome of this meeting, we urge the government to commit appropriate funds based on a fair evaluation of available immuno-oncology treatments, while also considering the current and future diagnosis rate of cancer in Australia."

"This will allow Australians to access IO medicines at rates already seen in some European countries. In these countries, the implementation of innovative pathways, policy solutions and agreements have enabled faster access to IO treatments as well as providing budget certainty for the reimbursement of pan-tumour oncology treatments<sup>1</sup>," continued Mr Azrak.

The current Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) process requires all new cancer treatments to be assessed on an individual tumour basis, resulting in delays in the approval of IO treatments that could potentially save or extend lives<sup>2</sup>.

It can take up to two years for individual new cancer treatments to be approved by the PBAC<sup>1</sup>. A significant influx of submissions for IO treatments in the next few years are expected and if each submission is assessed separately it could result in significant delays for some Australians with cancer in accessing IO treatments through the PBS.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a multi-cancer approach to IO medicine access could provide the Federal Government and PBS with greater budget certainty, while also cutting red-tape by reducing the administrative resource burden placed on the Department of Health and the PBAC in assessing each individual submission<sup>4</sup>.

"We eagerly await the PBAC's recommendations from this Special Meeting sooner rather than later. We welcome the opportunity to work with the PBAC, Federal Government, industry and patient groups on driving forward these recommendations for a fit for purpose streamlined reimbursement system in Australia."

"Developing a streamlined process is needed as soon as possible as it has the potential to benefit a large number of patients as early as next year," said Mr Azrak.

MSD submitted a proposal designed to potentially save or extend the lives of 40,000 cancer patients over the next four years<sup>5</sup> to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) as part of the process to make Minister Hunt's initiative a reality. Over the next two years, MSD plans to make more than 20 IO submissions to the PBAC.<sup>6</sup>

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### About MSD

For more than a century, MSD, a leading global biopharmaceutical company, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for the world's most challenging diseases. MSD is a trade name of Merck & Co., Inc., with headquarters in Kenilworth, N.J., U.S.A. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, MSD continues to be at the forefront of research to advance the prevention and treatment of diseases that threaten people and communities around the world - including cancer, cardio-metabolic diseases, emerging animal diseases, Alzheimer's disease and infectious diseases including HIV and Ebola. For more information, visit [www.msd-australia.com.au](http://www.msd-australia.com.au) and connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Charles River Associates, A white paper on alternative approaches to assessing and reimbursing medicines with multiple indications, June 2018.

<sup>2</sup> MSD data on file

<sup>3</sup> MSD data on file

<sup>4</sup> MSD data on file

<sup>5</sup> MSD data on file

<sup>6</sup> MSD data on file