



Shane Rattenbury MLA

Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability
Minister for Corrections and Justice Health
Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety
Minister for Mental Health
Member for Kurrajong

Office of the Deputy Secretary
Adjunct Professor John Skerritt
Therapeutic Goods Administration
PO Box 100
Woden ACT 2606

Dear Professor Skerritt

I am writing in my capacity as ACT Minister for Mental Health. I have had representations from Mr Patrick O'Connor regarding his published report *'Prescribed Deaths, Life in the Killing Zone'*.

Mr O'Connor has identified a range of risks he considers are associated with benzodiazepines, antidepressants, antipsychotics and opioid medications typically prescribed for pain management, anxiety, depression, addiction and other mental illnesses. From his investigations, he draws the conclusion that the necessary warnings are not provided to Australians who are prescribed such medications.

Mr O'Connor's report seeks urgent attention in updating the Consumer Medicines Information (CMI) for these medicines so consumers can be fully informed of the risks and he argues this will lead to a reduction in pharmaceutical related harms. He also recommends pharmacists are diligent in providing consumers with CMIs and verbal advice on the risks and warnings.

As these issues are governed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), I would appreciate your consideration of the issues and solutions provided by Mr O'Connor in his report and his letter to you on the 4th August following your initial reply, as many of these issues impact the lives of Canberrans. I would be grateful if you could provide me with a response regarding what can be done to address the concerns raised by Mr O'Connor.

Further, over prescribing, addiction and misuse of pharmaceuticals is a well-known international concern. For many years this has received significant public attention, and there is a growing pool of peer-reviewed literature indicating there is a correlation between prescription of certain medications and risk of suicide. As Minister for Mental Health this is an issue we need to target proactively and promptly as a matter of public safety.

I welcome your advice on what is being done at a national level to mitigate the risks associated with these prescription medicines to avoid any more Australian's developing dependencies and co-morbidities, potentially leading to avoidable deaths. Evidence has demonstrated that when

ACT Legislative Assembly

London Circuit, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia
Phone +61 2 6205 0005 Email rattenbury@act.gov.au



@shanerattenburymla



ShaneRattenbury



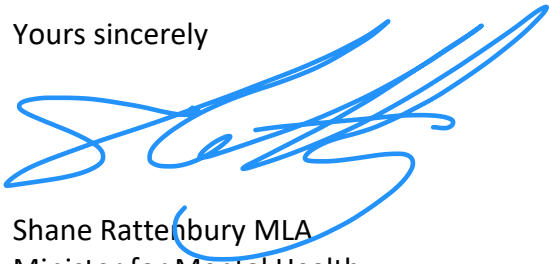
shanerattenbury



scheduling of certain drugs is made more restrictive, there is a reduction of scripts dispensed. I am curious if there have been considerations of this reform for scheduled drugs that do have high dispensing rates, and lead to dependency, misuse and abuse. I also welcome any feedback and advice on key initiatives the TGA is undertaking to tackle these issues in Australia.

I thank you for your time to review this letter and the report, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Shane Rattenbury MLA
Minister for Mental Health

9/9/20