



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

15 OCTOBER 1989

I call on the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to negotiate on the issue of Pharmacy remuneration on the basis agreed at our meeting on 27 September.

Contrary to the agreement reached at that meeting - that the decision of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Remuneration Tribunal was a fact and would be accepted as such, and that the integrity of the budget would be maintained - the Guild now seeks an increase in dispensing fees above the level determined by the Tribunal, fees paid out of taxpayers money.

On the Guild's own figures pharmacists have achieved substantial increases in recent years. The Tribunal, on evidence presented, found they were over remunerated.

The ball is in the Guild's court. It should come back to the negotiating table with proposals that are realistic.

The Government is open and available for a resumption of talks and has already offered a \$41 million increase on top of the Tribunal's decision to implement the Tribunal's recommendations on an essential pharmacy allowance, the professional role of pharmacists and industry restructuring.

We are willing to listen to the Guild's views on these matters and involve the Guild in their implementation.

The Government will continue to counter misinformation on the issue and ensure that the public has access to publicly subsidised medication. But we cannot and will not tolerate any group in the country being unaccountable for their use of public money.

Over half a billion dollars will be paid to chemists this year and the mechanism of accountability for their funding is the Pharmaceutical Benefits Remuneration Tribunal.