



10/8/11

The Hon Mark Butler MP  
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing  
GPO Box 9848  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Butler,

**Re: The NHMRC ADHD Guidelines**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Management Committee and Membership of the Learning Difficulties Coalition of NSW Inc. (LDC). The LDC is the peak advocacy group for the 1:5 young people with learning and attentional difficulties. The LDC represents parent support groups across the state encompassing ADHD, Aspergers syndrome, Learning Difficulties, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Velocardiofacial Syndrome (VCFS) and Tourette's Syndrome.

We are somewhat perplexed as to why the draft ADHD Guidelines have not yet been formally released? As we understand it, the formalising of the guidelines was held up due to concerns about references involving US researcher Dr Joseph Biederman- even though his studies comprised less than 10% of the 1000 articles reviewed by the initial working party. Now that the Biederman issue has been resolved, why can't the draft guidelines be published?

I note in your recent media release that a new working party has been appointed and conflict of interest forms completed. If the NHMRC had concerns about the conflict of interest, surely it could have followed the precedent set in the Independent Committee to Review Human Cloning and Embryo Research Legislation and appointed a High Court Judge or lawyer as a chair. We seek to understand, why it is necessary to appoint a new working group and delay release of the Clinical Guidelines that were developed by eminent experts in the field in Australia. As the NHMRC funds scientific research not opinion, then what will another working party achieve? Whilst conflict of interest statements have been tabled by the new working party, there has not been account taken of the public declarations of personal opinion by some of the new working party that have no evidence base. Therefore the appointment of a new working party raises the potential for bias far stronger than the previous working party, as well as duplication of cost and of most concern to our members, delays for clinicians and families accessing evidence based guidelines.

We also note that there is no representation of educators on the new working party? This is a notable absence giving the high incidence of comorbid learning difficulties and language processing problems evidence in ADHD. The other omission would appear to be an adult psychiatrist or advocate for adults with ADHD.

The initial working party completed conflict of interest requirements and undertook a rigorous review of international literature which resulted in an excellent document tailored for different groups, including parents and carers. We request that the report of the working party on ADHD be formally accepted pending the review by the newly appointed working party. Otherwise Australia will lag behind other western countries who've have guidelines for ADHD in children and adults since 2006.

Yours sincerely

Jude Foster  
President  
on behalf of the Management Committee

c.c: **Professor Warwick Anderson AM**,  
CEO NHMRC  
**Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells MP**  
Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Ageing.