

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for the GCSB
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry



Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques

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Denise Astill
denise@facsnz.com

Tēnā koe Denise,

Government response to the Health Select Committee report – Petition of Denise Astill: Inquiry into the numbers harmed by antiepileptic medicines during pregnancy

I am writing to acknowledge the concerns you raised in your petition entitled "*Inquiry into the numbers harmed by antiepileptic medicines during pregnancy*". I apologise for the time it has taken me to respond to you since the Select Committee report. I assure you that all possible measures have been taken since receiving your petition to ensure future harms to pregnant women and their children are minimised.

I am very concerned about the harm that has been brought to my attention due to improper warning of contraindications for pregnant women. This is the result of systemic issues that I am taking very seriously. I appreciate your advocacy on behalf of other affected individuals and their families.

During the same period another petition of Sarah Teare to "*Publicly continue to fund Lamictal for epilepsy and mental health patients*" also highlights common themes of needing to strengthen communication and consumer information and clarify the roles and responsibilities for communication between prescribers and pharmacists. The Ministry of Health has established a long-term cross-sector work programme in response to these petitions for safer prescribing and dispensing practices.

I enclose for your information, the Government's response to the Health Select Committee's recommendations to be tabled at Parliament, which has recently been considered in Parliament. It outlines the ongoing actions taken to improve communication practices across the prescribing and dispensing system, regarding labelling and cautions in respect to pregnancy for women of childbearing age.

Nāku noa, nā

Hon Andrew Little
Minister of Health