



## COMBINED PENSIONERS AND SUPERANNUANTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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Serving pensioners of all ages, superannuants and low-income retirees.

*Consumer Protection Awards – 2002, 2003, 2004*

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### **USFTA - There is no such thing as a free lunch but affordable medicines not too much to ask**

“Good on Mr Latham for sticking to his guns and refusing to put Australian health care on the negotiating table with the US,” Morrie Mifsud, State President, said.

“We have been saying all along that we are dead-set against this deal. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is a model that countries around the world seek to emulate. It is a fair and responsible system. It works. While we applaud the amendment to save our PBS we are still very concerned that the agreement will encourage privatisation of health services.

“We don’t believe for a second Mr Howard’s claim that US companies will not try to extend patents into Australia and increase the cost of our essential medicines.

“Explain to us then, Mr Howard, why there are influential Americans who point darkly to the future and argue that Australia has been freeloading for too long? ‘There’s no such thing as a free lunch. Somebody has to pay for the research and development of these miracle drugs,’ said Senator Jon Kyl, a Republican who visited Australia as one of the chief USFTA lobbyists (4 Corners 02/08/04).

“It is a well known fact that the US healthcare system stinks for the ordinary working Joe. American pensioner Paulette Beaudoin said on the recent 4 Corners episode, ‘My country doesn’t work for me, that’s for sure. Other countries, their country works for the people to help them out. Mine doesn’t. Not at all - far from it.’

“Well, Mr Howard, the PBS works for us. Labor’s amendments are a mere formality. They only penalize drug companies who use questionable patent claims to prevent the entry of generic drugs into Australia. If, as the Coalition claims, the US drug companies have no intention of meddling with our pricing system on the PBS then what is all the fuss? Make the amendment and let us get on with the election!

“One other thing. If it is proven in the future that the Australian public was deceived as to the true nature of the USFTA and the adverse effects to our PBS, then all Liberal and National Party politicians who were involved in this fiasco should forego their current and/or future superannuation entitlements. “

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