



## CITIZENS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

*The National Office for Australia and New Zealand of the international organisation the Citizens Commission on Human Rights  
In Australia, the Citizens Committee on Human Rights Inc  
Established in 1969 by the Church of Scientology to investigate and expose psychiatric violations of human rights*

30 May 2011

Dr Philip Brock  
Chair of Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists  
309 La Trobe Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000

CC: Dr Maria Tomasic  
President  
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

Dear Dr Brock

**RE: Article in the Herald Sun, "Alarm as more kids on antidepressants,"  
30 May 2011**

I am following up on a comment you made in the above article in which the College expresses "alarm" over antidepressants being prescribed children and "demanded answers from the government." Further, you are quoted: "I would be very alarmed if these figures were true as there is no indication for an antidepressant medication to any child under the age of six. I have written to the government before asking if these figures are valid. The fact we are still seeing this kind of data demands an answer."

The College was a member of the Department of Health and Aging investigation into antidepressant prescriptions to children and adolescents, the first meeting of which was held on 18 February 2009. Freedom of Information documents also show that a second meeting was held on 27 August 2009, and that the RANZCP attended both meetings.

My first question is: 1. How, then, can the College now publicly be "demanding answers" when they were part of the investigation that was supposed to be providing those answers? It is misleading for the College to be making a public statement alarmed at the statistics when they were part of an investigation in 2009 regarding this. There is nothing within the resulting report, "Prescribing of Antidepressant Medication for Children: Outcome Statement based on meetings 18 February and 27 August 2009," that reflect any action to be taken to drastically reduce the risk of children being prescribed antidepressants.

The statistics provided the College in those meetings indicated that 26,368 prescriptions for 2-11 year olds were prescribed for antidepressants. The PBS/RPBS statistics for the same year show that 3,835 2-10 year olds were prescribed the drugs. The PBS/RPBS statistics for 2008/09 and 2009/10 show increased prescription trends for 2-11 year olds rising nearly 30% from 5,191 to 6,666. Therefore,

2. What is the College doing to get accurate statistical information collected and made publicly accountable?

3. Is the College aware of the GlaxoSmithKline marketing campaign for its antidepressant Aropax called "APlus project, which advocated five 90-minute counselling sessions for depression conditional upon the person taking Aropax? The "starter pack" provided a free box of Aropax. Is the College conducting any investigation into or does it monitor the potential for such programs, including the depression-screening SPHERE (Somatic and Psychological Health Report) program, to influence prescription trends?

4. What is the College doing about off-label prescribing to children given that Dr. Steve Hambleton, vice-president for the AMA admitted in the above media report that he had given antidepressants to 6 year olds, for which antidepressants are not approved for depression.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely

Shelley Wilkins  
Executive Director