



**Senator the Hon Santo Santoro
Minister for Ageing**

MEDIA RELEASE

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PBS and Medicare boost for older Australians

The decision to expand eligibility for the osteoporosis medication alendronate under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) would greatly benefit thousands of older Australians, the Minister for Ageing, Senator Santo Santoro, said today.

The Prime Minister, John Howard, today announced that alendronate (in the form of Fosamax[®] Once Weekly and Alendro[®] Once Weekly) would be made available on the PBS from 1 April for patients with osteoporosis aged 70 years and over who were at high risk of fracture, as measured by a bone mineral density test.

Alendronate is currently available on the PBS for patients with osteoporosis who have already suffered a bone fracture following minimal trauma, but the new measure may help prevent fractures occurring in the first place for around 40,000 new patients in the first full financial year of listing.

“By 2010-11, some 73,000 older Australians will be able to enjoy a more active and healthy life as a result of this decision,” Senator Santoro said.

“This is a very serious commitment by the Howard Government to the health and wellbeing of our nation builders.

“And it is further underpinned by the decision to cover under Medicare bone mineral density tests for all patients aged 70 years and over from 1 April 2007.

“Nearly two million Australians currently live with osteoporosis and, as we live longer and our population ages, that number is expected to continue to rise.

“These two measures show that the Howard Government is strongly engaged in the process of planning for population change, and is already putting in place measures to meet the medical needs of older people, both now and in the future.”

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