



Health Minister
Tanya Plibersek

RU-486 subsidy won't increase abortions: govt

AAP WITH NIAMH MULLEN

FEDERAL Health Minister Tanya Plibersek says if the government subsidised medical abortion on the PBS, it would not lead to more terminations.

In what Ms Plibersek described as an important first step, the PBAC has recommended mifepristone (RU-486) and misoprostol be reimbursed. The government will now review factors such as cost and supply of the drugs. A final decision on PBS listing is due before the election.

"It's not my intention that this become a political football," Ms Plibersek said.

If listed, the drugs – which are on the World Health Organization's list of essential medicines – would likely cost \$5.90 each for concessional patients and \$36.10 each for general patients, saving women hundreds of dollars.

Overseas studies showed their increased availability did not lead to an increase in terminations, Ms Plibersek said. "I think the notion that people will become more frivolous because of the introduction or availability of such drugs is just not borne out."

Opposition leader Tony Abbott said he would accept the advice of the PBAC on drugs if he was elected prime minister. As health minister in the Howard government, he described the abortion rate as a "national tragedy".

The PBAC recommended listing mifepristone and misoprostol for termination up to 49 days' gestation "on the basis of similar effectiveness and lower cost compared with surgical termination".

The PBAC also recommended the listing of three new oral anti-coagulants - rivaroxaban (Xarelto, Bayer), dabigatran (Pradaxa, Boehringer Ingelheim) and apixaban (Eliquis, BMS/Pfizer) - for the prevention of stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation.