



Victims waiting for action on arachnoiditis

By **JULIEANNE STRACHAN**

LIBERAL MP for Swan in Western Australia Steve Irons has promised answers to sufferers of the crippling adhesive arachnoiditis disease who have been waiting for the government to take up their cause.

Mr Irons, who successfully pushed for a parliamentary roundtable into the consequences of the disease, said Health Minister Peter Dutton had told him the government would provide a response to the report that came out of the roundtable.

"The previous government did not respond to the report and the term of Parliament expired, so there is no onus on the new government to respond," Mr Irons said. "But I have asked the Health Minister to do it and he assured me this government will respond. I don't have a timeline on that."

The report found that oil-based dyes known as Myodil and Pantopaque, which were used at hospitals several decades ago, had caused adhesive arachnoiditis in some patients. The dyes were injected into patients who had back injuries so their spinal cords and spinal nerves could be visualised by X-ray.

The report recommended drug manufacturer GlaxoSmithKlein, which produced Myodil, establish a charitable foundation to help sufferers of the disease. The drug company has dismissed the suggestion.

Adhesive arachnoiditis sufferer John Goff, of Monash, has been eagerly awaiting the outcome of the report.

"I made a submission to the committee, that Medicare should cover the cost of physiotherapy sessions for people with adhesive arachnoiditis and then bill the cost back to GlaxoSmithKlein," he said.

The report found there was little awareness of the disease, even in the medical community, and recommended the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners provide GPs with educational and training opportunities aimed at raising awareness of the diagnosis, symptoms and treatment of the condition.

"I have said to GPs before that I have adhesive arachnoiditis and they have looked at me to say 'what are you talking

about' and I tell them to look it up on their computer – it's there," Mr Goff said. "Then they say 'what will we put you on?'"

Adhesive arachnoiditis has no cure, but Mr Irons agreed that early diagnosis would help sufferers.