Media Releases

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The review was requested by the Federal Minister for Health and Family Services, Dr Michael Wooldridge and conducted by the Department in consultation with relevant medical experts.

Dr Wooldridge said the Department had examined the scientific and ethical aspects of the research.

"In relation to the short children treated with norethandrolone, the review found that serious long-term side effects were unlikely," Dr Wooldridge said.

"In relation to the hormone diethylstilboestrol used to retard the growth of tall girls, I am aware of the ethical issues and health concerns raised by women who had been involved in the research. I have been advised that there is no scientific evidence raising concerns about possible lasting adverse effects.

Dr Wooldridge said the report indicated that efforts were made by the researchers in the studies at the time to counsel the girls and their families on the likely side-effects of this treatment.

"This practice was possibly better than the standards and accepted practices at the time of the study and as a result, some potential participants withdrew from the study.

"Today Australia has a highly sophisticated set of ethical guidelines on health and medical research which emphasise the rights of the individual and the necessity of obtaining informed consent. These guidelines are among the most stringent in the world," Dr Wooldridge said.

"However, I have asked the National Health and Medical Research Council to review the available information and consider what amendments, if any, might be required to current research practices in the light of these reports," he said.

Media Contact:

Bill Royce, Dr Wooldridge's Office, (02) 6277 7220

Dr Michael Fett, Office of the NHMRC, (02) 6289 4506 begin_of_the_skype_highlighting (02) 6289 4506