

Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury
HM Treasury
Horse Guards Road
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20 August 2009

Dear Mr Byrne

EQUITABLE LIFE

I am writing in response to your letter of 22 July 2009, which concerned your statements in the House of Commons on 21 July in response to an urgent question about Equitable Life that was put down the previous day.

You say in your letter that you are writing '*as a matter of courtesy, and to avoid any doubt, ... to clarify the context*' in which your comments were made. You say that you hope your letter '*helps avoid any potential misunderstanding*'.

I am not aware of any misunderstanding of my views on these matters which are a matter of public record, as indeed are those of the Government. I noted what you said in the House on 21 July, and did not recognise it as a true representation of my position. That said, this is not the first time that the Government has misrepresented my position in order to defend its own and I suspect it will not be the last. I am content, therefore, for my published reports and the official record of what I said to the Public Administration Select Committee to provide the definitive sources for my position, and to leave matters there.

I am sending a copy of your letter and this response to Dr Tony Wright MP, Chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee. Given the wider public interest in these matters I will also place this correspondence on our website.

Yours sincerely

Ann Abraham
Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman



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