

Media release

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SHPA welcomes National Medicines Policy Review to reflect hospital-led revolution in medicines

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) enthusiastically welcomes the long-awaited review of the 22-year old National Medicines Policy as an opportunity to reflect fundamental changes to medicines access, policy and funding and the increasing importance of hospital pharmacy to the sustainability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Confirmed today at the PSA21 virtual conference, the review of the National Medicines Policy is the first since its development in 1999, when there was no crossover between the PBS and Australia's public hospitals. Over the next decade, six states and territories progressively became signatories to the Pharmaceutical Reforms Agreement, enabling the supply of PBS medicines upon discharge from hospital and for hospital outpatients.

In 2019-20, PBS expenditure in hospitals hit another record high, with hospital pharmacists now managing over 23% of all PBS expenditure, including 75% of all Section 100 Highly Specialised Drugs Program expenditure and 58% of Section 100 Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy expenditure.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the past two decades have seen significant steps toward more unified and cohesive approaches to medicines access across Australia's federated system which historically divided acute hospital care and community-based primary care.

'At the same time, complex and high-cost medicines – a large proportion of which are initiated or provided to patients in hospital and specialist settings – have dominated new PBS listings, facilitating access to medicines and pharmacy services for Australians based on their preferred care providers and their preferred care settings.

'SHPA applauds the ongoing, bipartisan approach to PBS listing decisions informed by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee and looks forward to a revised National Medicines Policy that recognises this significantly changed landscape.'

Ms Michaels says consistent increases in the proportion of growing PBS expenditure in hospital pharmacy reflects the complex and contemporary needs of Australian patients.

'As the fastest-growing pharmacy sector, now accounting for 23% of the profession, hospital pharmacy will provide crucial insight to this important Review.

'On behalf of our members we welcome the Review scope, which will be supported by a consultation process that ensures diverse stakeholder and consumer contributions are captured.

'The early and pivotal roles of hospital pharmacists in the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out further exemplify the centrality of hospital pharmacy to the safe and effective use of medicines in Australia, and we look forward to contributing to this timely Review.'

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for leading pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working across Australia's health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. Embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams and equipped with exceptional medicines management expertise, SHPA members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

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