

Media release

Wednesday 31 January 2024

Harnessing workforce and improving medicines access key to optimising care for all Australians

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is calling for cost-effective solutions that enhance the efficiency and capacity of Australia's healthcare system as part of its [2024-25 Federal Budget Submission](#).

Calling for investment across three key focus areas - medicines access, scope of practice, and workforce development and sustainability - SHPA's recommendations aim to optimise patient care, improve medication safety, and provide equitable and affordable access to medicines for all Australians.

SHPA President Tom Simpson says hospital pharmacists, skilled in providing clinical pharmacy services, can provide cost-effective healthcare solutions by limiting medication wastage, reducing medication-related harms, optimising medication use; as well as decreasing patient length of stay in hospital and hospital readmissions.

'The value of clinical pharmacy services is well-established in the literature, with an Australian economic analysis indicating a \$23 return for every \$1 invested in clinical pharmacy services.

'Pharmacists can alleviate pressures on our medical colleagues by working to their full scope of practice which can itself translate to significant cost benefits. For example, [recent research](#) has shown that the health system can reduce admission lengths by ~10% and save \$726 each time a patient receives care through the Partnered Pharmacist Medication Charting (PPMC) model.

'Pharmacy technicians also working to their full scope of practice through more efficient inpatient medication management systems and assisting in clinical support roles, enable pharmacists and nursing staff to spend more of their time delivering direct patient care and other clinical activities, improving patient outcomes and health system efficiency.

'We are therefore calling for our skilled workforce to be fully harnessed so that the Federal Government can better mitigate unnecessary health costs and optimise patient care for all Australians.

In addition, Mr Simpson says SHPA's recommendations include proposals to address current limitations in PBS funding arrangements while calling for a nationally consistent approach to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, currently only available in the public health systems of six of the eight states and territories.

'Until the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is available in every hospital in all States and Territories, Australia can never achieve truly equitable healthcare.

'SHPA strongly recommends that the Commonwealth extends to the NSW and ACT hospitals the same access to the PBS as patients in every other Australian jurisdiction, as recommended to the Commonwealth by the [Mid-term Review of the National Health Reform Agreement](#).

'This will ensure a consistent standard of care for vulnerable patients and help alleviate pressure on the primary care sector in the immediate post-discharge period. It is unthinkable that patients in the NSW and

ACT need to see their GP within a few days following an acute hospital admission for another prescription when the patients in the rest of the country leave hospital with enough medication to last for a month or more.'

Mr Simpson says supporting Indigenous Australians to receive equitable access to healthcare should also be a priority.

'For many years, Indigenous Australians have experienced significantly poorer outcomes in areas of health compared to other Australians.

'The burden of disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is currently 2.3 times that of other Australians. This disparity has persisted despite various policy efforts aimed at addressing them. An obvious opportunity for improvement would be for the Federal Government to allow public hospitals to participate in the Closing the Gap PBS Copayment Program which provides copayment relief to First Nations peoples, bringing hospital arrangements into line with community pharmacy payments.

'SHPA has long advocated on this issue which the Senate supported in its amendment of the [National Health Amendment \(effect of Prosecution-Approved Pharmacist Corporations\) Bill 2023](#) in March last year and we continue to advocate for this significant and low-cost measure that will improve access to medicines in public hospitals for Indigenous Australians.

'Our recommendations include tangible steps towards healthcare equity which align with broader national efforts to address health disparities and improve the overall wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.'

SHPA's key 2024/25 Federal Budget recommendations include:

1. Embedding non-dispensing pharmacists into primary care teams in general practices and residential aged care facilities to enhance medication safety and quality use of medicines.
2. Funding private hospitals to provide SHPA's two-year Pharmacy Resident/Registrar Training Programs to support workforce recruitment, retention and development, as well as enhance the capacity of this sector.
3. Transitioning to independent five-year, nationally consistent Hospital Pharmacy Agreement for the public hospital pharmacy sector including: implementation of Pharmaceutical Reform Agreements (PRAs) in New South Wales (NSW) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and enabling public hospital pharmacies to supply PBS-subsidised medicines for inpatients.
4. Improving First Nations equity of access to medicines and clinical pharmacy services, and supporting medication adherence by, among other means, enabling hospital pharmacists to supply medicines to Indigenous Australians under the Closing the Gap (CTG) PBS Co-Payment Program and integrating pharmacists within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

Full access to SHPA's 2024/25 Federal Budget recommendations is available on [SHPA's website](#).

– ends –

For more information contact:

Caroline Barlow, Media and Stakeholder Relations
cbarlow@shpa.org.au | 0436 009 138

About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional organisation for the 6,100+ Hospital Pharmacists, and their Hospital Pharmacist Intern and Hospital Pharmacy Technician colleagues 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.

shpa.org.au |   