

Media release

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Safety and quality must guide 60-day dispensing, impact on hospital pharmacy needs to be understood

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) today has called on Federal Health Minister Mark Butler MP to further engage with all pharmacy stakeholders regarding today's announcement for 60-day dispensing of 325 medicines, while backing in safety and quality as guiding principles for medication supply, and the need for a viable pharmacy sector that works together around every patient.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says as hospital pharmacists support Australians to access medicines when and where they need them, the impact of the changes on hospital pharmacy services needs to be understood.

'The hospital pharmacy sector accounts for around a quarter of annual Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) expenditure. In hospitals, medicines supply quantities are regularly determined by what is suitable for each patient as they leave hospital to support their quality of care, safety and adherence, particularly in rural and remote patients who face barriers to attending specialist outpatient clinics and take complex, high-cost medicines.

'Sometimes it is less than 30 days, sometimes it is more than 30 days. A team-based approach where doctors and pharmacists work together is critical to ensure a focus on clinical need, safety and quality use of medicines.

'We will seek more information on the impacts of 60-day dispensing on the hospital sector, private hospital pharmacies and community pharmacies who provide medication supply and pharmacy services to private hospitals, as remuneration from PBS medicines supply is essential to pharmacy service delivery.'

Ms Michaels says a viable pharmacy sector across the care continuum is crucial to equitable medicines access.

'Australia's community pharmacy network is an essential feature of our healthcare system to support medicines access and pharmacy services, and they must be supported to provide services that put patient care at the centre.

'We look forward to more detail on how the \$1.6 billion in savings will be reinvested back into pharmacy services. This could represent an opportunity for both major arms of the pharmacy sector to further address the 250,000 medication-related hospital admissions in Australia each year, by leveraging and expanding many innovative services already in place in Australian hospital pharmacy departments through targeted Federal government support.

'While today's announcement is a surprise to Australian pharmacy, the hospital pharmacy sector has had its fair share of surprises in recent years with Federal budget cuts to hospital pharmacy

remuneration and PBS price disclosure policy changes – which have negatively impacted hospital pharmacy care delivery – introduced under the previous government.

‘In this spirit, while we will always support safe and quality medicines access, we also require consultation and partnership with the Federal Government on fundamental changes to our healthcare system, so that the entire pharmacy sector is primed to deliver the essential medicines and pharmacy services to our patients as safely as possible.’

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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.

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