

Media release

Thursday 16 March 2023

SHPA taking action on Closing the Gap and the Voice to Parliament

On Closing The Gap Day 2023, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) reiterates its call for action to reduce longstanding inequity in medicines access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients receiving Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines from hospitals, and formally declared its support for a First Nations Voice to Parliament.

SHPA President Tom Simpson says the Commonwealth needs to urgently enable public hospitals to supply medicines under the Closing The Gap PBS Co-Payment Measure.

'On behalf of our members, who see the acute care impacts of inequitable access to medicines, we have [called for real action on Closing the Gap in this term of Parliament](#).

'The scope of the Closing The Gap PBS Co-Payment Measure should also extend to cancer medicines and highly specialised drugs listed on various Section 100 programs on the PBS, which are currently excluded.

'These crucial policy changes will bring us a step closer to achieving the principle of equity and access described in the recently refreshed [National Medicines Policy](#) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'Unlike community pharmacies, public hospital pharmacies are currently unable to supply PBS medicines to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients under the Closing The Gap PBS Co-Payment Measure, which hamper Australia's efforts to close the gap in healthcare outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'This results in inequitable, higher out-of-pocket costs and co-payments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or situations in which these patients miss out on medicines altogether, increasing risk of readmission to hospital.'

'We strongly support our members' call for [pledged support for achieving Indigenous health equity by 2030 to be a year-round focus](#), including through embedding tangible steps in professional development planning and initiatives such as Indigenous Allied Health Australia's (IAHA) Cultural Responsiveness Training, which is [free until 3 April 2023 for all SHPA members](#).'

Today SHPA also formally reiterated its strong support for First Nations people, and commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, alongside the organisation's recently approved *Reflect* Reconciliation Action Plan.

'The SHPA Board declares its support for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution,' says Mr Simpson.

'I'm proud of our organisation's long history of supporting social justice. SHPA's support for the Voice aligns with our values and vision, not just for our profession, but for a fair and equitable society.'

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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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