

Media Release

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Safety, access and sustainability as Hospital Pharmacists release 2022 Federal Election priorities

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists Australia (SHPA) has today announced its patient-focused 2022 Federal Election policy priorities, underlining the importance of a sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), greater access to the PBS for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and a strong workforce pipeline to support the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

On behalf of the 6,100-strong Hospital Pharmacy workforce and ahead of an expected May Federal Election, SHPA's priorities will enable significant steps of reform to reduce inequity in safe access to medicines, particularly among more vulnerable populations requiring hospital care, and in Indigenous communities.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says while medicines safety enjoys bipartisan support, now is the time for meaningful action and solutions led by expert Hospital Pharmacists.

'Australians are rightfully proud of the healthcare system they enjoy, with access to vital medicines and treatments through the PBS and Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) lauded worldwide.

'However there remain longstanding inequities in this medicines access, particularly for hospital patients who often experience a delay in accessing some PBS medicines due to arbitrary funding rules that do not put their needs first.

'SHPA has welcomed the establishment of five-year National Health Reform Agreements (NHRA) for Public Hospitals, Community Pharmacy Agreements, and Strategic Agreements with the pharmaceutical industry, however the glaring lack of commensurate arrangements for Hospital Pharmacy to support medicines access – worth \$3 billion annually – remains a significant and dangerous gap in our healthcare system.'

The Hospital Pharmacy sector's three key priorities for the next term of Parliament are:

1. Continue and enhance support for timely, quality, equitable and safe patient access to PBS medicines in hospital settings through improved Pharmaceutical Reform Agreements
2. Reduce longstanding inequity in medicines access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients receiving PBS medicines from hospitals
3. Commission a ten-year National Pharmacy Workforce Plan to support pharmacy workforce sustainability.

Ms Michaels says a lack of action on PBS co-payment relief for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians contradicts policies that pursue meaningful reconciliation.

'PBS co-payment relief is most challenging for Indigenous patients who face higher co-payments for PBS medicines in hospital settings, and we acknowledge our Community Pharmacy colleagues who also continue to raise this as a major issue for the wider Australian community.

'It is simply unfair, results in poor medicines use, increased hospital re-admission risk and renders Closing the Gap in health an elusive ambition.'

Ms Michaels says SHPA is committed to collaboration to address Medicines Safety and Quality Use of Medicines – Australia's 10th National Health Priority Area, declared during this term of Parliament – on behalf of the uniquely specialised Hospital Pharmacy workforce.

'Representing the fastest-growing workforce in Australian pharmacy, SHPA is committed to working with federal government ministers, shadow ministers and backbenchers to achieve further support for timely, quality and safe access to PBS medicines and pharmacy services for the Australian community.

'Over the next term of Parliament, we will continue to work with the Department of Health on the PBS, MBS, NHRA and other funding mechanisms to achieve the aims of Australia's National Medicines Policy.

'After two years of incredible disruptions and challenges, this election will show the importance of continued stability in hospitals and healthcare, and funding across pharmacy settings that prioritises patient care settings and reflects the reality on the ground is the critical first step.'

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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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