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Medicine pricing reform the right prescription

The Grattan Institute's conclusion that Australian Government policies have not gone far enough or fast enough to reduce the price of generic medicines no longer covered by patents should be welcomed and acted upon, says the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) following the release of *Health Report – Cutting a better drug deal* yesterday.

The report, which updates savings estimates following similar reports released in 2015 and 2013, argues Australians pay more than \$500 million a year too much for prescription medicines.

'Drug prices in Australia are more than twice as high as in the UK and more than three times higher than in New Zealand...Australians on average pay five times the best international price for a group of seven commonly prescribed drugs,' says the Grattan Institute's Professor Stephen Duckett, author of the report now [available online](#).

Kristin Michaels, CEO of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) says the recommendations of the report, including introducing international benchmarking to close the price gap for comparable generic medicines more quickly, could help ensure more Australians have access to affordable medicines.

'Eight per cent of Australians delayed getting, or did not get, their prescribed medication due to the cost over the past 12 months, which is eight per cent too many – SHPA supports any measure that minimises the likelihood people will forego prescribed medical treatment.'

Ms Michaels says community health and wellbeing could reap the benefits of subsequent government savings if resources were redirected to expand and improve personalised clinical pharmacy services.

'In addition to making medicine prices fairer, prescription medicine pricing reform could free up considerable funds to be spent on expanding community access to Home Medicines Reviews, which are proven to improve uptake and adherence to complex medicine regimens.

'Another hugely beneficial initiative, specifically recommended in the Grattan Institute's report, is supporting more pharmacists to provide clinical services in General Practice, as a key pillar of patient-centred multidisciplinary care teams.'

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national professional organisation for more than 3,000 pharmacists, pharmacists in training, pharmacy technicians and associates working across Australia's health system. SHPA is the only professional pharmacy organisation with a core base of members practising in public and private hospitals and other health service facilities.

SHPA is committed to facilitating the safe and effective use of medicines, which is the core responsibility of pharmacists, especially in hospitals. SHPA supports pharmacists to meet medication and related service needs, so that both optimal health outcomes and economic objectives are achieved for Australians, as individuals, for the community as a whole and for healthcare facilities within our systems of healthcare.