

# Media release

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## Embed pharmacy in aged care to shift the dial on patient safety

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed the [Morrison Government's \\$537 million response](#) to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety [Interim Report](#), while reiterating the need for embedded pharmacist positions in the aged care setting to ensure the additional investment truly 'shifts the dial' on medicines safety and quality.

Today's announcement includes an increase of \$25.5 million in funding for medication management programs, including 'support for pharmacists to ensure more frequent medication reviews can occur'.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the additional support should consider the best possible approach to delivering much-needed clinical pharmacy services in aged care.

'Investment to improve access to Residential Medication Management Reviews (RMMRs) for aged care residents is welcome.

'We are mindful, however, that research shows, in many cases, the majority of pharmacy recommendations made through RMMRs do not translate into action by prescribers. To remedy this critical disconnection pharmacists must be included in residential aged care teams.

'SHPA will continue to advocate for [investment in clinical pharmacy services for aged care residents](#) so pharmacists can identify and manage medication-related issues and reduce harm, while ensuring identification of deprescribing opportunities and high quality clinical handover as patients move between care settings.'

In response to damning assessments of widespread chemical restraint in Australia's aged care sector, the funding for medication management programs will also cover the development of new education resources for prescribers to support the appropriate use of antipsychotics and benzodiazepines and targeted letters will be sent to high prescribers.

'We welcome the directive of the Royal Commission that restraint must only be used as a last resort.

'Many of our members, in specialty geriatric pharmacist roles, are uniquely positioned to determine if antipsychotic medicines prescribing is appropriate. The imminent release of the SHPA *Standard of Practice for Geriatric Medicines in Pharmacy Services* will provide greater clarity around optimal use of medicines and the quality care our aged care residents deserve.

'Looking beyond the Royal Commission, the fact remains most aged care facilities do not have a pharmacist on staff, despite research consistently finding beneficial outcomes from the provision of clinical pharmacy services.

'We will continue to [call for embedded pharmacist roles](#) as the most effective path to improving the safe and quality use of medicines among this vulnerable population.'

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**For more information contact:**

Nick Sharp-Paul, Head of Strategy and Communication  
[nsharp-paul@shpa.org.au](mailto:nsharp-paul@shpa.org.au) | 0411 098 838

**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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