

Media release

Thursday 2 December 2021

Landmark bill set to shore up Australia's medicines supplies

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) today welcomes new Federal Government legislation to further mitigate the impact of medicines shortages on Australians and ensure new and innovative medicines are accessible, available and affordable for all Australians into the future.

The *National Health Amendment (Enhancing the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2021* (the Bill) will enable the new Strategic Agreements between the Commonwealth and the Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association (GBMA) and Medicines Australia set to begin on 1 July 2022.

Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says SHPA is committed to supporting policies and provisions which mitigate medicine shortages and ensure Australians can access their medicines without disruption.

'On behalf of Hospital Pharmacists who continue to dedicate precious time to medicines shortage workarounds during a global pandemic, we welcome the new measures reflected in the Bill to enable several security of supply measures contained in the Strategic Agreements.

'Managing medicine shortages is a recurring issue affecting Hospital Pharmacists and the patients in their care – in 2017 SHPA brought the issue to national attention through our report [Medicine shortages in Australia: A snapshot of shortages in Australian hospitals](#), which prompted the legislation of a nationwide system mandatory reporting of medicines shortages on 1 January 2019.

'Hospital Pharmacists are pleased to see the Federal Government taking further action to address medicines shortages, with these new Strategic Agreements requiring pharmaceutical sponsors to maintain four to six months' stockholding of vital medicines at risk of supply disruption.

'More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened Australia's already vulnerable medicine supply chains, due to Australia's remoteness and lack of local medicines production facilities. As Hospital Pharmacists were preparing for the COVID-19 pandemic last year, SHPA's [COVID-19 Hospital Pharmacy Capacity Snapshots](#) revealed widespread shortages of key medicines required to treat severely ill COVID-19-positive patients requiring ventilation in intensive care.

Additionally, the Bill will provide certainty on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) pricing policy and ensure the PBS subsidy supports reliable medicines supply to Australia over the next five years. Ms Michaels says the PBS changes will allow the Federal Government to achieve significant savings.

'These savings will enable around \$1.9 billion to be reinvested into the PBS to support the anticipated listing of more than \$5 billion in new drugs and expanded patient access.

'We welcome this Bill, which when complemented by Federal Government's \$1.3 billion Modern Manufacturing Initiative, will minimise and mitigate the prevalence of medicine shortages and alleviate

the pressure on global supply chains, ensuring Australians continue to have timely access to the newest and most effective medicines available around the world.’

– ends –

For more information contact:

Susie Brown, Communications and Media Advisor

sbrown@shpa.org.au | 0437 119 286

About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for over 5,200 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.

shpa.org.au |   