

Media release

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Hospital Pharmacists welcome Mark Butler, Emma McBride, Ged Kearney and Malarndirri McCarthy to expanded Health Ministry

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) today congratulates Mark Butler MP on his appointment as Minister for Health and Aged Care, as part of a significantly expanded Labor health ministry following the recent Federal Election, while reiterating the importance of improving equitable access to medicines as a health care priority.

Alongside Mr Butler in the first Albanese Ministry is Emma McBride MP MSHP as Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health, Ged Kearney MP as Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy MP as Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says since Mr Butler was last in the Health portfolio, Hospital Pharmacy has seen significant growth, now accounting for 24% of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) expenditure.

'Hospital Pharmacists strongly welcome Minister Butler back into the Health Ministry after serving in the Health Ministry under the previous Labor Federal Government.

'Since Minister Butler and his colleagues were last in government, Hospital Pharmacy has become the fastest growing pharmacy sector, expanding by over 50% since 2013.

'This growth has correlated to steady expansion of the PBS – the majority of new PBS listings are complex and specialised medicines used in hospitals – with Hospital Pharmacists are now responsible for over \$3 billion of annual PBS expenditure.'

Sworn in earlier today at Government House, the Albanese Ministry sees a record number of female ministers, many represented in the Health portfolio.

'Hospital Pharmacists are extremely proud to see fellow SHPA member and former Hospital Pharmacist Emma McBride MP taking on the dual roles of Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health,' says Ms Michaels.

'As a former Chief Pharmacist at Wyong Hospital, Assistant Minister McBride will bring a wealth of experience at the coalface to the Health portfolio, particularly regarding rural and regional health where access to equitable healthcare services remains a major issue.

'SHPA also welcomes Ged Kearney MP as the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, a former nurse who also has frontline experience in the public hospital system and the issues facing our healthcare system's capacity and ability to maintain high-quality care.

‘SHPA is also keen to work with Senator Malarndirri McCarthy in her capacity as Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health, to end the longstanding inequities to medicines access for Indigenous Australians in Australian hospitals.’

Ms Michaels says Hospital Pharmacists look forward to working with Minister Butler and his Assistant Ministers in supporting and guaranteeing quality and equitable access to medicines.

‘This is particularly important given the numerous outstanding reviews into medicines policy and programs that are underway, and includes ensuring the sustainability of Labor legacy programs such as Medicare and the PBS.’

‘Hospital Pharmacists strongly welcome the Labor Government’s commitment to having on-site pharmacists in residential aged care facilities from 2023, which will draw from existing workforce resources. SHPA stands ready to support the Government in implementing this program through our suite of Geriatric Medicine education and workforce credentialling programs.’

‘Hospital Pharmacists provide care to the most complex, unwell and vulnerable Australians. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the acute attention needed on hospital funding and resourcing, including our clinical workforce. The pharmacy sector is currently undergoing a transformation amid recruitment and retention challenges, and SHPA reiterates its election call for a National Pharmacy Workforce Strategy.’

‘Australia has world-class systems supporting medicines access, but these are only as safe and fair as the expert pharmacists managing them. The new government represents a new opportunity for medicines safety, everywhere.’

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional organisation for the 6,300+ 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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