

Media release

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Hospital Pharmacists welcome National Cabinet's extended hospital funding and commitment to reform

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed the National Cabinet's announcement that the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response will be further extended by three months to 31 December 2022, and commitment to review how Australia's hospitals and healthcare system is funded.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the three-month extension of 50-50 funding between the Commonwealth and jurisdictions for hospital funding in recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic is welcome news for Hospital Pharmacists, but long-term certainty is needed.

'We have all seen the reports on the strain, stress and fatigue in our at-capacity emergency departments and hospital wards. Hospital Pharmacists live this reality every single day, working under immense pressure to ramp up and maintain bed flow, as they are typically the last clinician a patient sees before discharging from hospital.

'While this three-month extension is welcomed, the hospital sector and Australian patients need more durable certainty, particularly as the extension ends during the holiday season, when there is increased need for emergency department and hospital services.

'SHPA strongly supports entrenching the 50-50 hospital funding partnership as a permanent arrangement, as supported by all jurisdictions, and lifting the 6.5% growth cap.

'We hear from our hospital pharmacy leaders and managers that the growth cap is a significant handbrake on the development of pharmacist-led outpatient services, which are proven to prevent avoidable hospital readmissions and improve care outcomes.'

At last Friday's meeting, National Cabinet also committed to reviewing how to improve hospital and healthcare funding and care delivery.

'As we expect Prime Minister Albanese and Minister Butler to be negotiating the next National Health Reform Agreement for public hospital funding in this term of parliament, it is timely that we look at how Australia's healthcare system is funded and delivered,' says Ms Michaels.

'Concurrent reviews into the National Medicines Policy, federal chemotherapy medicines funding and access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines in hospitals have demonstrated how our federated healthcare system leads to inequitable access to care and can delay treatment for many Australians.

'Hospital Pharmacists frequently face barriers to providing patient care due to arbitrary funding rules that do not place Australian patients at the centre.

'After many years of policymakers talking about patient-centred care, it is time to walk the walk.'

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional organisation for the 6,100+ 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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