

Media release

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Hospital Pharmacists urge NSW Government to address recommendations from regional health inquiry, ensure safer and timelier care through workforce investments and PBS reform

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed yesterday's release of the Report into the Inquiry of [Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales](#) (the Report), urging the NSW Government to enact all recommendations in the Report and for the Australian Government to provide commensurate support where identified.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels, who gave evidence at the Inquiry, says 'The Report's findings on workforce and healthcare service inequities are consistent with feedback SHPA has received from NSW Hospital Pharmacists over many years.'

'We are pleased that there are several recommendations in the Report to address the critical shortage of health professionals in rural, regional and remote communities, including the Report's recommendation calling to develop and implement a 10-Year Rural and Remote Medical and Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategy which aligns with SHPA's [2022 Federal Election Priority 3](#).'

According to workforce statistics, New South Wales, despite being a more populous state, has around 400 less Hospital Pharmacists than Victoria.

Ms Michaels noted that the Inquiry began after a NSW regional patient in Taree died from a catastrophic stroke in part as a result of preventative stroke medicines not being administered when insufficient hospital pharmacy services were available to ensure a safe transition of care.

'Insufficient Hospital Pharmacy workforce puts patients at risk of medication errors and adverse events, with analysis from the Productivity Commission revealing that in 2017–2018, NSW patients were 48% more likely to experience an adverse effect from medicines than Victorian hospital patients.

'As detailed in [SHPA's submission to the Inquiry](#), SHPA members in NSW report that their hospitals have comparatively lower clinical pharmacy service coverage compared with other jurisdictions, and this is exacerbated even more in rural, regional and remote areas.'

'A major driver of this lower clinical pharmacy service coverage is the lack of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) reform in NSW public hospitals, and on behalf of NSW Hospital Pharmacists, we are pleased to see that the Report calls on the NSW government to implement PBS reform.'

Chair of SHPA's Rural and Remote Specialty Practice Leadership Committee, Susan Trevillian, says 'Timely pharmacy services are essential in all hospitals – where the most unwell Australians are treated, and the most complex and high-risk medications are used – to ensure safe medication use.'

'The inequities and discrepancies we see between metropolitan hospitals and regional, rural and remote hospitals, must be addressed, as all Australians deserve high quality and safe hospital care, regardless of where they live, work, or seek emergency healthcare.'

'Australian Hospital Pharmacy departments must be staffed and resourced appropriately according to [SHPA's Standards of Practice](#), and key investments into Hospital Pharmacy Interns, Hospital Pharmacy Foundation Residency programs and skilled Pharmacy Technicians are needed, to meet these standards over the coming years, and support a sustainable rural pharmacy workforce pipeline.'

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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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