

Media release

Tuesday 14 May 2024

SHPA welcomes wins for First Nations people and older Australians as cost-of-living budget improves medicines access

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is tonight celebrating a Budget measure that will improve access to medicines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leaving hospital, among many patient-focused measures in the [Federal Budget](#) that boost medicines affordability and expand access to health care for all Australians.

SHPA President Tom Simpson welcomed an historic increase in Federal hospital expenditure, and an \$8.5 billion health care package with \$1.2 billion to strengthen Medicare, saying PBS co-payment relief is timely as cost-of-living pressures continue.

‘On behalf of our members we welcome the \$137.3 million announced tonight to improve medicines access and aged care services for First Nations people, including \$11.1 million to expand the Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program.

‘SHPA has long campaigned for improving care for First Nations people by extending the Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program to public hospital pharmacies. We are pleased to see that the Federal Government has listened to SHPA and is delivering equity between the primary care and acute care sectors, supporting our patients as they move through the health system.

‘The co-payment indexation that freezes costs for general patients for one year, and concessional patients for five years is also a welcome measure that will improve medicines access and compliance for all Australians.

‘We also welcome \$190 million in funding to strengthen Medicare to improve long-term hospital care, support for earlier hospital discharge and to help older Australians recover from a hospital stay with short-term care through the extended Transition Care Program. Pharmacists with advanced specialty skills must be included in the program.’

The Budget confirmed a significant increase to hospital funding agreed at National Cabinet, which will see the Australian Government contribute at least an additional \$13 billion to state public hospitals over the next 10 years, increasing the Commonwealth contribution to the cost of care to 45 per cent.

Mr Simpson says SHPA members are counting on a new landmark hospital agreement with negotiations expected to conclude next month including the establishment of a Pharmaceutical Reform Agreement (PRA) with NSW and ACT.

‘Increased hospital funding is always welcome, but we must also address the glaring issue that people leaving hospital in NSW and ACT are the only patients not receiving PBS subsidised medicines to take home.

'SHPA has been tireless in advocating for patient equity across the nation for access to medicines on discharge from hospital. Australia cannot afford to have a two-tier health system and this longstanding inequity needs to be urgently addressed.

'Finalising this agreement will bring NSW and ACT in line with the rest of the country, providing patients with access to a PBS quantity of their medicines on discharge from hospital. This is critical for ensuring safer discharges and transitions of care, which will ease reliance on our primary healthcare systems.

'Medicines are our most common healthcare intervention, but it is through ensuring equitable access and guidance, and expert care from pharmacists, we can keep more Australians healthier and out of hospital.'

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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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