

# Media release

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## Specialty pharmacist expertise and training can boost access to reproductive health

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed the recommendations of a Senate inquiry into access to contraception and sexual health care services, echoing the call for health professionals to practice to their full scope, supported by more pharmacists with specialty skills, to improve equitable care for women across the country.

The Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's report [Ending the postcode lottery: Addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia](#) also calls for increased Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) coverage for contraceptives and review of sexual and reproductive healthcare training, aligning with SHPA recommendations to the inquiry and testimony provided by Dr Luke Grzeskowiak, a member of SHPA's Women's and Newborn Health Leadership Committee.

SHPA President Tom Simpson says the report reiterates the need for additional workforce investment to attain pharmacist-to-bed ratios outlined in SHPA's *Standards of Practice in Clinical Pharmacy Services*.

'Hospital pharmacists working in maternity and reproductive health provide expert advice to their medical and nursing colleagues, and women of childbearing age, around evidence-based use of medicines in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

'Unfortunately we often see clinical pharmacy services to these patients deprioritised as our limited workforce of clinical pharmacists are assigned to "higher risk" patient cohorts and wards.

'As noted by the Senate Committee, expanding this highly skilled pharmacy workforce requires quality training programs; SHPA's Foundation Residencies and Women's and Newborn Health Advanced Training Residencies are uniquely positioned support this upskilling to support pregnant and breastfeeding women across all care settings.'

Mr Simpson also welcomed the Senate Committee's call for broader PBS coverage to reduce care inequity.

'Medicines are a common treatment option in women's health and reproductive healthcare, including contraception, fertility treatment, pregnancy and termination.

'The cost of maternity multivitamins can be prohibitive given they are not subsidised on the PBS, yet are essential in preventing neural tube defects and other neonatal medical conditions.

'SHPA is pleased to see a recommendation addressing our calls for expanded PBS listing for contraceptives to facilitate choice and reflect current guidance.

'Pharmacists with specific expertise complete this picture; they need to be present in all healthcare settings where patients receive sexual and reproductive healthcare.

‘This is particularly essential for pregnant and breastfeeding women for whom medicines use is common, to help them make informed and evidence-based decisions, empowering them in their own healthcare.’

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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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