

Media release

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Hospital pharmacists welcome commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050

The Society for Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has today supported the Australian Government's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions in Australia by 2050 on behalf of the hospital pharmacy profession.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the adoption of the net zero target into government policy this afternoon; the healthcare sector contributes around seven per cent of Australia's carbon emissions footprint, with public hospitals, private hospitals and pharmaceuticals contributing to over 60% of these healthcare sector related emissions.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says climate change is widely acknowledged as the biggest global health threat of the twenty-first century, and hospital pharmacists have a clear role to play to reduce carbon emissions in healthcare.

'At the bedside, hospital pharmacists and the clinical pharmacy services they deliver to patients are supported by literature to sustainably improve patient outcomes, reducing the length of hospital stays, reducing the unnecessary use of medicines and supporting deprescribing practices alongside doctors.

'At a systems-level, hospital pharmacists are key stakeholders in medicines procurement and inform hospital-wide policies on medicines use and governance, which is critical to minimising unnecessary wastage of medicines.'

Ms Michaels says the widespread health harms from climate change are profound and impact all Australians and health services.

'Hospital pharmacists nationwide are concerned that inaction on climate change and warming of the planet will contribute to negative health outcomes of Australians – particularly the most vulnerable – increasing hospitalisations due to extreme weather events such as bushfires, and fostering the spread of infectious diseases.

'Our members in regional and rural Australia have long been concerned about logistical difficulties with cold-chain supply chains to areas of Australia with extreme heat. Temperature breaches are sadly accepted as inevitable, which often results in costly waste of cold-chain medicines such as insulins and vaccines. Global warming will further exacerbate the difficulties in delivering vital medicines, that are intact and safe to use, to all parts of Australia.'

The World Health Organization has outlined that climate change will have a significant impact on the social and environmental determinants of health between the years of 2030 and 2050, and is expected to cause 250,000 additional deaths per year.

'Australia has an opportunity to lead the world in sustainable practices and minimise medicines wastage, as well as providing preventative health care to Australians to prevent hospital admissions such that healthier populations will also need less need for acute healthcare for generations to come', says Ms Michaels.

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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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