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Parliamentary Secretary to the
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Asthma pilot program in community pharmacies

Community pharmacists will be able to offer ongoing assistance to asthma patients who are struggling to manage their condition, under an Australian Government program now under way.

The Government will provide up to \$12.9 million for the Asthma Pilot Program under the Community Pharmacy Agreement with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. Up to 100 community pharmacies across Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT will take part in Stage 1 of the Program.

Pharmacists will receive special training in providing the Pharmacy Asthma Management Service (PAMS), an ongoing cycle of asthma assessment, management and review. PAMS is provided as consultations by the pharmacist within the local pharmacy. It aims to improve patient's self-management of asthma, including their use of medication.

Importantly, the Program also aims to improve patient safety and health outcomes by encouraging community pharmacists to work more closely with general practitioners as part of the primary care team.

The Program will assess the clinical benefits for patients and the practical feasibility of providing PAMS within community pharmacies. It will also consider ways to encourage patients with poorly controlled asthma to enrol in PAMS.

A team from the University of Sydney will provide training and support to community pharmacists participating in Stage 1 of the Program.

Improved patient self-management and early intervention to prevent asthma and other chronic conditions becoming life-threatening is an integral aim of the Australian Government's comprehensive health reforms.

Community pharmacists can potentially play a greater role in primary care, using their existing training and skills. This pilot is one of a number of professional programs funded under the Community Pharmacy Agreement that explore expanded roles for community pharmacists in chronic disease management.

Community pharmacists will work closely with general practitioners as part of the primary care team in all these programs. An important aspect of the Asthma Program is that it will promote greater communication between patients, general practitioners and community pharmacists, to improve the safety, consistency and effectiveness of asthma care.

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