Prescriptions via telehealth – state and territory rules

29 May 2020

As part of the National Health Plan, Australian governments are fast-tracking electronic prescribing. Work to upgrade healthcare providers’ clinical software is well underway. We expect it to be increasingly available from the end of May 2020. See our fact sheet on the fast-tracking measure.

Interim arrangements for prescriptions

In the meantime, patients can receive medicines via telehealth services with an image-based prescription.

All states and territories allow image-based supply of medicine within their legal frameworks. Health care professionals should consider state and territory rules when prescribing and supplying medicines.

State and territory arrangements

Australian Capital Territory

Existing legislation in the ACT allows the image-based supply of all medicines.

The ACT enables the Commonwealth Special Arrangement under the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008. Prescribers can use image-based prescribing for Appendix D and Schedule 8 medicines in the ACT. This supports telehealth consultations and prescribing of essential medicines for all vulnerable patients in the community.

The DORA real time prescription monitoring system is available in the ACT for patient care using a Schedule 8 medicine.

New South Wales

New South Wales allows access to most medicines via image-based prescription. The exceptions are Schedule 8 medicines and Schedule 4 Appendix D.

NSW does not permit a digital signature, nor use of text message.

See more on image-based prescribing in NSW for:
• pharmacists
• prescribers

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory allows image-based prescribing of all Schedule 4 medicines. This does not include Schedule 8 and Schedule 4 Appendix D medicines.

Queensland

In Queensland the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 (HDPR) now allows image-based prescription. This excludes Schedule 8 medicines, restricted drugs of dependency (e.g. benzodiazepines) and anabolic steroids.

See more about image-based prescriptions in QLD for:

• pharmacists
• prescribers

South Australia

In South Australia, an exemption to the Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011 was gazetted on 16 April 2020. Most Schedule 4 medicines are available via image-based prescription, excluding Schedule 8 and Schedule 4 Appendix D medicines.

For more information see emergency supply and prescribing medicines on the SA Health site.

Tasmania

Tasmania allows supply of most Schedule 4 medicines. Exceptions include Schedule 8 narcotic substances and Schedule 4 restricted substances.

See more on image-based prescriptions in Tasmania for:

• pharmacists
• prescribers

Victoria

In Victoria, a new emergency order allows access to medicines using the image of a prescription. This excludes Schedule 8 and Schedule 4 drugs of dependence (Schedule 11 of the Victorian Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981).
Victoria does not adopt Appendix D of the Commonwealth Poisons Standard. The list of substances in Schedule 11 of Vic DPCS Act is less restrictive than Appendix D.

Key S4 restricted substances for community pharmacy are:

- benzodiazepines
- anabolic steroids
- pseudoephedrine
- phentermine

It does not include tramadol, pregabalin, gabapentin, z-drugs, retinoids, reproductive medicines or S4 codeine preparations.

**Western Australia**

In Western Australia, Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines are available from the image of a prescription.