



Improving Access to Medicines – supporting pharmacies and consumer access

The Government will fund a range of programs to boost safer medication management in the community. The Government will also provide \$230 million for an ongoing additional administration, handling and infrastructure fee and community service obligation payments to pharmacies. Pharmacies will be reimbursed more quickly for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) claims – reduced from up to 16 days to between two and nine days from the day electronic claims are received, at a cost to Government of \$213 million in 2018–19. An additional \$15 million for pharmacy programs will be provided through the sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement to promote quality use of medications by patients, including through further supporting the Dose Administration Aids and MedsCheck programs. The Government will also align public and private hospital pharmacy pricing with the community pharmacy pricing arrangements from 1 July 2019.

Why is this important?

Taking medicines incorrectly can have significant health implications. Encouraging people to properly manage their medication through pharmacy programs will reduce the level of medication misadventures, improve patient adherence to prescribed medicines, reduce medication-related problems and improve health outcomes.

The PBS covers more than 5,000 life-saving and life-changing medicines products across a broad range of conditions, from asthma and arthritis to diabetes and cancer. The Government's subsidy of PBS medicines reduces their cost by 89 per cent on average. On average, each month, more than one million people take five or more PBS medicines, and more than 2.3 million people are supplied with antidepressants, opioids and antipsychotics.

The change in PBS payment timeframes recognises the importance of effective cash flow and stock management for community pharmacy. With hospitals able to make large gains on wholesale mark-ups for PBS medicines, aligning them with prices that apply to community pharmacy will provide a consistent funding arrangement across dispensers.

Who will benefit?

All Australians benefit from PBS medications that help prevent serious conditions, reduce doctor visits and keep people out of hospitals.

How much will this cost?

This will cost \$458.3 million from 2018–19 to 2022–23.