

Tuesday 2 April 2019

Budget's health funding welcome but more is needed for pharmacy

The government's commitment to pharmacy in tonight's 2019-20 Federal Budget through the extension of the AHI fee and reduced Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) wait times is welcomed by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA).

PSA National President Dr Chris Freeman said PSA acknowledged the investment in primary care, aged care and mental health, and the importance of funding for those sectors.

"Leading into the next Community Pharmacy Agreement, we would expect at least the same level of investment in community pharmacy and pharmacists to improve accessibility of care and health outcomes for all Australians," Dr Freeman said.

"In a budget that has now returned to surplus and is projected to be in surplus we need to have investment in pharmacy and pharmacists across sectors to improve the health of Australians.

"We note the budget announcement to align community pharmacy and private or public hospital pricing arrangements for high cost medicines but we remain concerned about the level of hospital pharmacy services that may be affected by this announcement and the impact this may have on medicine safety and patient care.

"PSA welcomes the government's announcement of an additional \$15 million for pharmacy programs through the sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement to promote quality use of medicines, including further supporting the Dose Administration Aids and MedsCheck programs.

"We are delighted the government will build on its efforts to reduce prescription opioid use. We welcome the expansion of the Rural Health Outreach Fund to give people better access to pain management specialist services and train providers to improve prescribing habits.

"The announcement of \$7.2 million to establish an Australia-first take-home naloxone program is a significant investment in reducing deaths caused by opioids. It is vital for pharmacy to be a key component of this strategy."

Dr Freeman said the establishment of a new unit of clinical pharmacists within the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission that will work directly with residential aged care providers to educate them around best practice use of medicines will improve medicine safety across the country.

"We also welcome the government's announcement of support for a Canberra trial to embed a part-time pharmacist in all 27 residential care facilities," Dr Freeman said.

"Pharmacists have unique skills in medicines management and are the best placed professionals to ensure better use of medicines, focusing on regulation, education and intervention.

"The Budget begins to address PSA's call in its pre-budget submission for \$17 million of seed funding to embed pharmacists in aged care facilities.

“PSA has shown in our *Medicine Safety* report that medicine safety is a major problem in aged care, where 98% of residents are taking a potentially inappropriate medicine.

“Pharmacists embedded in aged care facilities can protect residents from the harm caused by overuse and misuse of medicines.

“We need a national commitment to ensure pharmacists are used to their full potential to lead a culture of medicine safety in aged care.

“The government’s announcement of funding for the continued operation of the My Health Record system is also a welcome investment that will allow people to access and control their medical history and treatments, including vaccinations.

“Nine out of 10 Australians already have a My Health Record and pharmacists are playing an important role in ensuring My Health Record delivers the efficiencies and effectiveness in healthcare that it has promised.”

Media contact: Jarryd Luke, *Senior Communications Officer* – 0487 922 176