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# MEDIA RELEASE

09 JUNE 2023

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## MPs and Senators urged to support 60-day dispensing to save Australians money and time

Consumer, health and doctor organisations have united to urge members of parliament (MPs) and Senators to put consumers first and support 60-day dispensing to save money and time for Australians.

Eight key organisations representing health consumers, including from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural communities, as well as health professionals have put their name to an open letter to federal parliamentarians.

[The reforms](#) will double the amount of medicines pharmacists can dispense to patients to up to 60 days' worth for more than 320 medicines for stable conditions on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, when deemed safe and appropriate by a patient's GP.

The open letter urges MPs and Senators to put health consumers first and support the reforms, and highlights how the initiative will benefit Australians, particularly those who are more vulnerable.

### 60-day medicine dispensing will

- Benefit approximately 6 million people with chronic and ongoing conditions – including a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Australians who have a higher prevalence of chronic conditions.
- Save consumers up to \$180 a year and more for people taking multiple medicines.
- Mean fewer trips to pick up medicines and repeat scripts, saving people time and money, and freeing up GP appointments for other patients.
- Bring Australia into line with other high-income countries like New Zealand, the USA and Canada, where people already have access to multiple months of medication on a single prescription.
- Improve system equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who suffer more from chronic disease. There is strong evidence showing the value of medicine cost reduction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Increase convenience for consumers, which will increase medication adherence.
- Implement a recommendation from the independent Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). PBAC has dismissed claims the change would cause medication shortages.

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## QUOTES

### **Royal Australian College of GPs President Dr Nicole Higgins:**

“60-day dispensing is a win for Australians, particularly those with chronic conditions, and those who are more vulnerable and battling cost-of-living pressures. I urge MPs and Senators to ignore the scare campaigns and support these changes, there has never been a more important time to save patients money and time.”

### **National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations Acting CEO Dr Dawn Casey:**

“We welcome this measure that will help ease the cost pressures for purchasing medicines for so many of our people. It can halve the annual cost of people’s medicines, which is a truly significant impact. In reducing the number of times people must attend a pharmacy for each of the chronic medicines, it will also greatly improve convenience for patients and further add to the value of the measure, especially when considering accessibility of some pharmacies and current cost of transport.”

### **Asthma Australia CEO Michele Goldman:**

“We have one of the highest rates of asthma in the developed world. The double dispensing savings for people with stable asthma will reduce out-of-pocket costs, reduce GP and pharmacy visits and associated costs, and reduce the likelihood of patients missing or rationing their medicine at the end of each month because they can’t afford another prescription.”

### **Lung Foundation Australia CEO Mark Brooke:**

“For millions of Australians and their loved ones who live with lung disease, this change means cheaper medicine, less unnecessary trips to the GP – freeing up the incredibly overburdened system, and less time for immunosuppressed people spent in crowded waiting areas. From our community’s perspective, those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) will be immediately affected, and for patients with stable chronic conditions it also reduces their risk of missing medication dosages at the end of the month when their script runs out. Australia is finally being brought up to the same standards as the New Zealand, Canada, US and Europe, and this shift is frankly overdue.”

### **The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners CEO Leanne Boase:**

“The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners supports 60-day dispensing in the interests of improving access to good health. Many Australians struggle to access a prescriber for repeat prescriptions, and 60-day dispensing will free up more appointments, improving access to timely primary health care. Where medicines are long term, especially in relation to stable chronic disease, significant savings for consumers in both cost and time can be made, as well as redirecting more health care dollars towards improving health outcomes. We are confident the Australian Government is acting in the best interests of the public, through better access to medicines, more accessible primary care, and in support of essential pharmacy services.”

### **Breast Cancer Network Australia Director Policy, Advocacy & Support Services Vicki Durston:**

“Those with cancer are often required to take medication, particularly hormone-blocking therapies, for a long period of time that can extend five to ten years past their diagnosis. Breast Cancer Network Australia stands with RACGP in supporting 60-day dispensing to not only help reduce this financial burden on top of the already significant cost of a cancer diagnosis, but to also help alleviate pressure on the primary health system and allow GPs to continue to give vital care and support to those who need it.”

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## **Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative Co-Chair Marina Chand:**

“The change to 60-day medicine dispensing will benefit culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Australians in particular, as we know our CALD communities have a higher prevalence of chronic disease. The savings on dispensing fees - \$180 a year and even more for people taking multiple medicines – will make a real difference for people and families in the current environment, with cost-of-living pressures increasing and pushing more people into hardship.”

## **Australian Medical Association President Professor Steve Robson:**

“The government’s changes are safe and supported by clear recommendations from the independent Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), including the requirement to ensure that only patients assessed as clinically suitable by a doctor are eligible.”

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