



DR RICHARD DI NATALE

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24/04/2019

Dr Christopher Freeman
National President
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's

Dear Dr Freeman,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) election asks. I appreciated the opportunity to speak at the launch of 'pharmacists in 2023' earlier this year, and look forward to continuing to work together in the next parliament.

The Australian Greens recognise and value the role of pharmacists in Australia's health system, from acute care right through to prevention. The Greens have long championed the greater harnessing of skills and experience of pharmacists beyond dispensing, for example in assisting the one in five Australians over 65 who are now living with multiple chronic disease.

The Greens believe that spending on health is an investment and that as a wealthy country, we are lucky to have the resources required to ensure that Australians have access to the essential treatments and procedures they need to live a healthy life. Of course we should work hard to ensure our health system is efficient and that we get value for the money we spend, but we need to move past viewing health spending as a crisis, and look at the opportunities. The Greens believe Pharmacy is a key element of that.

The Greens believe that the tendency for the debate to focus around the contribution of GPs and hospitals on reforming the system misses an opportunity for pharmacy to be engaged more, drawing on their experience and their linkages with the community, to drive better health outcomes.

We have released our 2019 election platform for drug law reform, which includes an investment of \$445 million over the next four years to fully fund opioid substitution therapy co-payments. This would significantly reduce the burdens on community pharmacies who provide these services by reducing the financial risks that pharmacists have to take when providing this essential services. That full platform is available here:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20Drug%20Law%20Reform.pdf>

We will be releasing our full health platform for the 2019 election in the next few weeks, including a significant investment in primary healthcare reform, as mentioned below. I look forward to discussing this reform with you soon.



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To respond to your specific election asks:

Address the alarming incidence of medicine-related harm in our health system by declaring medicine safety a national health priority

As your report, *Pharmacists in 2023*, highlighted: the annual cost of medication-related problems in Australia is nearly \$1.4 billion per year. This alarming statistic demonstrates how important pharmacists are. We support your call for this to be a national health priority, and for further action to be taken to address this critical problem.

Provide funding to embed pharmacists within healthcare teams, particularly in residential aged care facilities

The Australian Greens support providing funding for pharmacists to be embedded within healthcare teams, particularly in residential aged care facilities. We know how critical your work is, and that greater investment in this way will lead to long term savings, both economically and socially.

Accept the MBS review taskforce's recommendations to allow pharmacists to access allied health items to provide medication management services to patients with complex care requirements

Allied health items on the MBS need to be expanded, both in number and breadth of professions who are eligible to access them. We will wait for the overarching MBS Taskforce has made it's final recommendation to Government about access to the allied health items to make a formal comment on the recommendations of the review. In the interim, however, we support the intent of the recommendation of greater funding for pharmacists to provide medication management services through transparent funding mechanisms. We also have a \$3.5 billion plan to reform primary healthcare, which will provide greater support for people with chronic illnesses and additional funding of \$750 per year per patient for access to allied health services. This additional support, which would complement existing MBS items, will facilitate a range of professions, including pharmacists, providing greater support to patients with chronic illnesses.

Align the incentives for pharmacists to support rural and remote communities with those of other rural and remote health practitioners

People living in rural and regional communities experience poorer access to health services, significantly higher rates of disease and injury, worse health outcomes and a significantly shorter life expectancy compared to people living in major cities. The Greens understand that significant changes to current funding structures are required to support health practitioners in these areas to work to their full scope of practice in rural and regional areas. We would support changes to align the incentives for pharmacists to support rural and remote communities with those of other rural and remote health practitioners. However, as with all reforms to funding of the health system, these changes must be done in a transparent manner.



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Include PSA as a signatory to the community pharmacy agreement

The lack of transparency in the current community pharmacy agreement is very concerning. I have been advocating for greater transparency and reform of how the agreement is negotiated for many years now. The inclusion of the PSA as a signatory to the agreement is a welcome step, which we support. However, greater reform to how community pharmacy services are funded is also required. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to the PSA's 2019 election priorities, and I look forward to working together in the next Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Senator Richard Di Natale

Leader of the Australian Greens & Senator for Victoria



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