



**The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Federal Member for Flinders**

11 May 2019

Dr Chris Freeman
National President
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
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Dear Dr Freeman,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues raised by *the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia* and its members. A response to your questions is attached.

This election will have real consequences for Australia's economy and our future.

Despite global headwinds, our economy is strong. This year, for the first time in more than a decade, the Government will deliver a Budget surplus.

A stronger economy means we can deliver on our plans to:

1. Create 1.25 million more jobs over the next five years.
2. Maintain budget surpluses and pay down debt.
3. Deliver tax relief to encourage and reward hard working Australians.
4. Guarantee increased investments for schools, hospitals and roads.
5. Keep Australians safe and our borders secure.

The alternative at this election is Mr Shorten. Labor's risky agenda includes billions of dollars of higher taxes – on retirees, housing, incomes, investments, family businesses, electricity and more.

I appreciate and look forward to the ongoing constructive relationship with *the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia*. Thank you for communicating our response to your members.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Greg Hunt'.

Greg Hunt

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

The Morrison Government's *Long-Term National Health Plan* is providing Australians with access to quality medical care, record hospital funding, affordable life-saving medicines and breakthrough research for new drugs and treatments.

The Morrison Government's goal is to make our health system even stronger and to ensure it remains the best in the world.

By keeping our economy strong the Morrison Government will ensure the essential health services that Australians rely on such as *Medicare* and the *Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme* (PBS).

The Morrison Government has a clear commitment to list all of the medicines on the PBS that are recommended by the *Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee* (PBAC). Unlike Labor, the Coalition has delivered on this commitment because of our strong economic management. In 2011 Labor stopped listing medicines on the PBS because they couldn't manage the economy.

Australian medical researchers are making incredible breakthroughs which are transforming how we treat patients, especially through genomics and personalised medicine for cancer. The Coalition's 10-year medical research plan through the \$20 billion *Medical Research Future Fund* backs our local scientists and ensures we can quickly take life-saving discoveries from the laboratory to the hospital.

The Morrison Government agrees with the *Pharmaceutical Society of Australia* vision for the pharmacy profession outlined in the *Pharmacists in 2023* report. This is in recognition that it will improve outcomes for patients, the profession and for Australia's health system.

A re-elected Morrison Government will continue to support the pharmacy profession in meeting community health needs by ensuring that pharmacists are utilised to their full scope of practice.

Commitment 1 – Address the alarming incidence of medicine-related harm in our health system by declaring medicine safety a National Health Priority Area.

The Morrison Government is concerned by recent reports by the *Pharmaceutical Society of Australia* of the extent of medicines related harms in Australia.

The Morrison Government recognises the importance of medication management and invests significantly in programs to support patients use their medicines safely and as directed. Central to this is the expertise and counsel from pharmacists in the community and other pharmacy settings.

The Morrison Government is investing significantly in programs to support quality use of medicines through the *6th Community Pharmacy Agreement*, including:

- \$613 million to support community pharmacy programs that are continuing from the *Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement*;
- \$600 million to support a range of new and/or expanded programs including per service funding for *Dose Administration Aids*; and

- \$50 million to support a *Pharmacy Trial Program*, which seeks to improve clinical outcomes for patients and utilise the full scope of a pharmacist's role in delivering primary health care services. These include medication management programs and patient support services focusing on pain management, diabetes, mental health and reducing medicine induced deterioration and adverse reactions.

The Morrison Government will provide ongoing support for patients through the continuation and expansion of community pharmacy programs in the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement. This agreement will also seek to strengthen the frameworks to enable pharmacists to be utilised to their full scope of practice.

We will also continue to work with the sector to implement other initiatives already underway including:

- the implementation of electronic prescribing of PBS medicines to make it easier for patients to access their medicine through their community pharmacy through our \$28.2 million investment; and
- the establishment of *National Real Time Prescription Monitoring* to address abuse of addictive prescription medicines through our \$16 million investment.

However, more can be done to improve the use of medicines and address the abuse of prescription medicines.

This is why the Morrison Government will declare quality use of medicines and medicines safety a National Health Priority Area. We will work through *the Council of Australian Governments Health Council*, with the *Australian Commission of Safety and Quality in Healthcare the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia* and key stakeholders to support the initiation of this priority. This work will include the consideration of improvement of current frameworks, new best practice models and new national standards.

The Morrison Government will also undertake a multi stakeholder review of Australia's *National Medicines Policy* which will include, as part of its broad scope, quality use of medicines and medicines safety.

Launched in December 1999, *the National Medicines Policy* is a well-established and universally endorsed framework based on partnerships between Governments, health practitioners, the medicines industry and consumers.

The review will provide options to Government on how to modernise this policy, improve medicines use and safety, strengthen health technology assessment processes, and ensure ongoing timely, safe and affordable access to medicines for all Australians.

Commitment 2 – Provide funding to embed pharmacists within healthcare teams, particularly in residential aged care facilities.

The Morrison Government is acting to address the issue of medication management in residential aged care facilities. The Morrison Government has established a *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* which will include in its scope the use of medicines by aged care residents and providers. The Morrison Government will act upon these recommendations following the provision of the final report from the Commissioners.

The National Aged Care Quality Indicator Program is being expanded to include two new quality indicators – falls and fractures, and medication management, ensuring quality care and minimising the use of chemical and physical restraint.

The Morrison Government has established a new unit of clinical pharmacists within *the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission* and will work directly with residential aged care providers to educate them around best practice use of medicines.

We have also provided \$7.7 million in the 2019-20 Budget for a trial to embed pharmacists in aged care facilities to improve medication management. The trial will embed a part-time pharmacist in all 27 residential care facilities in Canberra and create stronger linkages with community pharmacy.

The progress of this trial and ongoing engagement with *the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia* and peak pharmacy groups will inform further initiatives. This will include consideration of options for additional government support for the integration of pharmacists within, and greater integration of community pharmacy with, aged care facilities.

Commitment 3 – Accept the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Taskforce’s recommendations to add items to allow pharmacists to access allied health items to provide medication management services to patients with complex care requirements.

The Morrison Government will continue to support the pharmacy profession in meeting community health needs by ensuring that pharmacists are utilised to their full scope of practice.

The Morrison Government will continue to work through the MBS Reviews process to modernise Medicare and will consider recommendations once they are finalised by the Taskforce.

Commitment 4 – Align the incentives for pharmacists to support rural and remote communities with those of other rural and remote health practitioners.

Rural Support Programs through *the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement* provide targeted programs and services to improve access to PBS medicines and support for people living in rural and remote regions of Australia.

The Coalition’s \$550 million *Stronger Rural Health Strategy* is an historic 10-year plan to meet current and future health workforce challenges. It represents the largest overhaul of Australia’s health workforce in decades. It is intended to meet the challenge of redistributing the workforce across regional, rural and remote Australia, beyond the cities and metropolitan areas.

The Morrison Government recognises the need to attract not just doctors to rural areas but also allied health professionals, nurses, and Aboriginal health workers and health practitioners to better manage patients with complex and chronic conditions.

The Stronger Rural Health Strategy, Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) will provide targeted financial incentives. The WIP incentives address workforce requirements in specific geographic areas, giving patients in regional, rural and remote areas improved access to quality medical, nursing and allied health services.

Funding for the WIP aims to strengthen team-based and multidisciplinary models of care enabling collaborative arrangements to be put in place that will better support community needs. The incentive funding will strengthen team-based and multidisciplinary primary care and support practices to engage the services of allied health professionals, including non-dispensing pharmacists, in all locations.

The outcomes from the *Pharmacy Trial Program*, and other proposals to improve access to medicines, medication management and targeted support from pharmacists in rural and remote communities will be considered in the context of the *Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement* and the establishment of quality use of medicines and medicines safety a National Health Priority Area.

The Morrison Government's Plan for Strengthening Australia's World-Class Health System is available here:

<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-strengthening-australias-world-class-health-system>