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Budget makes meds more accessible

PEAK industry bodies have welcomed Labor Government's 2024-25 Commonwealth Budget handed down last night, which introduced financial relief measures aimed at assisting patients and community pharmacies.

Key among these is the freeze of PBS co-payments, preventing annual CPI indexation for one year for all Medicare patients, and up to five years for pensioners and other concession card holders, (**PD** breaking news yesterday).

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President Prof Trent Twomey said, "the freezing of maximum medicine co-payments via the staged application of the discretionary \$1 discount will help Australians struggling with the cost of healthcare and will restore universality to the PBS".

The Guild stated the policy is set to save patients approximately \$318 million over the forward estimates, with an additional \$166.4 million projected for 2028-29.

Additionally, pharmacies are

set to receive a funding boost of \$151.1 million over five years for the provision of Dose Administration Aids (DAAs), plus an extra \$45.6 million in 2028-29.

The Guild stated these financial commitments were secured as part of the negotiations for the eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement (8CPA) to take effect from 01 Jul.

The 8CPA will also increase the DAA base cap from 60 to 90 per week per pharmacy, enhancing patient safety and compliance.

This is part of a broader effort to sustain a viable community pharmacy network, ensuring that healthcare remains a priority for all patients, said Twomey.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has also welcomed the Federal Budget.

National President Fei Sim said, "as negotiations on the 8CPA continue, PSA is highlighting the importance of funding for the delivery and quality improvement of pharmacist programs to further support patient safety".

The Budget will support the Aged Care On-site Pharmacists program, investing \$333.7 million to embed credentialed pharmacists in aged care facilities from 01 Jul.

Critically, the Budget also confirmed funding for pharmacists to deliver vaccination services in aged care and disability homes, actioning one of PSA's key recommendations in its 2024-25 Federal Budget Submission.

In addition, all PBS medicines dispensed by a community pharmacy, hospital, or approved prescriber will now be covered by the Closing the Gap PBS co-payment, making essential medicines free or cheaper for First Nations people.

Sim also acknowledged the \$160 million investment in women's health initiatives included in the Budget, which will help pharmacists deliver more services. *JG*

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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus full pages from:

- **TerryWhite Chemmart**
- **Guild Insurance**

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NT Budget funds

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has expressed its support for the recent enhancements to health services in the Northern Territory (NT), announced in the state's Budget this week by Chief Minister Eva Lawler.

The NT Budget will allocate \$12 million for the design and preparation stages of a new 120-bed residential aged care facility within the Palmerston Regional Health Precinct.

Additionally, it provides \$108 million for various mental health initiatives at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Dr Manya Angley, PSA's NT and South Australia President, emphasised the importance of this funding increasing healthcare accessibility.

She particularly noted the opportunities it creates for pharmacists to contribute to quality aged care and mental health services.

Dr Angley highlighted the role pharmacists will play in the soon-to-be-launched 'Aged Care On-site Pharmacists' (ACOP) program, which aims to ensure the Quality Use of Medicines and reduce medicine-related risks in aged care settings.

"The announcement of a new facility in Palmerston is another opportunity for pharmacists to support older Territorians through the soon to be launched federally-funded ACOP program."

Furthermore, Dr Angley pointed out that the increased investment in mental health services at the Royal Darwin Hospital would enable pharmacists to better support mental health across the Territory by optimising medication use.

She affirmed PSA's ongoing commitment to work with the NT govt to ensure accessible and comprehensive care for all Territorians, leveraging the full expertise of pharmacists across the health network.

Closing the Gap payments

AFFORDABLE healthcare for more Australians was highlighted in yesterday's Federal Budget, with funds allocated to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Budget confirmed an \$8.5 billion healthcare package which included key commitments such as \$1.2 billion to bolster Medicare and \$137.3 million to improve medicine access and aged care services for First Nations people.

There is also a substantial increase in hospital funding, with the Australian Government set to contribute at least an additional \$13 billion to state public hospitals over the next decade, raising its care contribution to 45%.

The Budget also expands the Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program with an additional \$11.1 million, ensuring more equitable healthcare delivery.

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia President Tom Simpson, expressed his approval for the Budget measures, noting the timely nature of PBS co-payment relief amidst rising cost-of-living pressures that "will improve medicines access and compliance for all Australians".

"On behalf of our members, we welcome the Federal Government's response to our advocacy by extending the Closing the Gap

PBS Co-payment Program to public hospital pharmacies, thus supporting patients as they transition through the health system," Simpson said.

An additional \$190 million is allocated to strengthen Medicare, supporting earlier hospital discharges and aiding older Australians with short-term recovery care through the expanded Transition Care Program.

Simpson emphasised the importance of including pharmacists with advanced specialty skills in these programs and expressed optimism about the ongoing negotiations towards a landmark hospital agreement and Pharmaceutical Reform Agreement with NSW and ACT, aimed at resolving disparities in medicine access upon hospital discharge.

"Increased hospital funding is always welcome, but we must also address the glaring issue that people leaving hospital in NSW and ACT are the only patients not receiving PBS subsidised medicines to take home," said Simpson.

"Finalising this agreement will bring NSW and ACT in line with the rest of the country and ensure safer discharges and transitions of care, as well as ease the reliance on our primary healthcare systems," Simpson concluded. *JG*

PDL pharmacy student grant winners

PHARMACEUTICAL Defence Limited (PDL) has announced the recipients of its 2024 Student Grants, celebrating the achievements of winners Yannee Liu and Riko Ngo from Victoria, and Aaron Stockwell from Western Australia.

The PDL Student Grant Committee, including Celia Sansom, PDL Director for WA, was impressed by the high standard of entries from students across all academic levels.

"It was inspiring to see the calibre of applications from students nationwide, which truly highlights the impact of our grant

program," remarked Sansom.

Each student winner will receive up to \$5,000 to cover their expenses associated with attending pharmacy conferences.

The financial support encompasses event registration, travel, and accommodation costs, along with opportunities for mentorship within PDL's network.

Liu and Ngo, students at Monash University, will be attending the PSA National Conference and Medicines Management event respectively, while Curtin University's Stockwell will also attend the Medicines Management event.

IPA opens school



THE Independent Pharmacies of Australia Group (IPA) has continued its global health efforts by partnering with Australian-founded charity, Growing Cambodia.

The collaboration has led to the construction of a school in the rural Beng community of the Siem Reap region.

Steven Kastrinakis, founder and Managing Director of IPA, shared his enthusiasm at the school's opening on 06 May, highlighting the profound impact of contributing to the educational needs of children in poverty-stricken areas.

"Education is a foundational pillar of health, and I am extremely proud that IPA has played a part in this initiative," said Kastrinakis.

IPA's commitment resulted in \$55,000 raised, funding the establishment of the school that includes two fully-equipped classrooms, a computer education room, a library, and a kitchen with a washing area to support nutrition and hygiene.

The school now serves 280 students, helping to enhance their English skills and provide better economic opportunities where such proficiency can lead to higher wages.

Additionally, IPA will aim to ensure student safety and consistent attendance by facilitating transportation and supporting ongoing resources including teacher salaries.

Further, MedAdvisor has donated 17 laptops to IPA's education initiative with Growing Cambodia.



Dispensary Corner

IN A stunning revelation from a 28-year study involving 92,383 health-conscious participants, it turns out that guzzling exactly seven grams of olive oil daily could be your brain's new best friend.

Researchers found that this slick habit could slash your risk of dying from dementia by a whopping 28% compared to those who rarely let olive oil grace their lips.

The study, which canvassed data from the Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study from 1990 to 2018, has culinary scientists and dieticians excitedly revising their notes in light of these findings.

The study further showed olive oil enthusiasts not only enjoyed a zestier diet but also had better heart health, proving that what is good for the old ticker is good for the brain too.

For the culinary conservatives who stick to margarine and mayonnaise, the study offered a compelling swap suggestion: trading just five grams of these lesser oils for olive oil could reduce the risk of dementia-related death by up to 14%.

But before you start slathering olive oil on everything in sight, remember that no significant benefits were found with other vegetable oils or butter.

So, it seems the secret to a robust noggin might just reside in the Mediterranean marvel that is olive oil, which could just move from being a kitchen pantry staple to a best seller on pharmacy shelves.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

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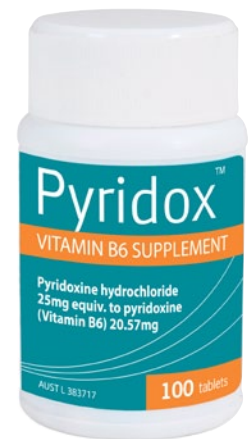
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For over 60 years, Guild Insurance has supported Australia's pharmacy profession through everything you do. Together with the PGA and PDL, we've worked hard to ensure our policies protect and reflect pharmacists' real-life needs.

Now that the PGA-driven scope of practice changes are live, we understand that, yet again, the real-life needs of pharmacists have changed, but our support hasn't. All Guild customers who participate in an approved scope of practice pilot can do so with confidence, knowing their insurance policy will still protect them.

What's a scope of practice pilot?

Scope of practice pilots will continue to evolve as state and federal governments and their agencies continue to work with our profession. In Queensland right now, community pharmacists who have undertaken 12 months of additional training can offer additional services to patients for a number of conditions, including school sores, shingles, mild psoriasis, wound management, swimmer's ear, weight loss management and hypertension, among others. It is these types of programs that Guild has committed to support through the addition of an additional benefit.

An additional benefit for Guild customers.

To provide cover certainty, the policy wording we apply to all Guild Pharmacy Business policies includes an additional benefit for 'Scope of Practice Pilots'. If you're already insured with Guild, this benefit is automatically applied. If you are not with Guild, you should ask your insurer if they can say the same.

If you'd like to find out more about Guild's exclusive support of pharmacy's scope of practice pilots, visit guildinsurance.com.au/pilot or if you'd like to be protected by a policy that is tailor made for Australian pharmacists, call a Guild insurance specialist on **1800 810 213**.

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