

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

TGA makes SSSI for clonidine 150mcg

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has advised it has implemented a Serious Scarcity Substitution Instrument (SSSI) for Catapres (clonidine, Clinect) 150 microgram (mcg) tablets, which will be in shortage from Dec 2025 to Apr 2026 due to manufacturing issues.

Catapres is the only brand of clonidine 150mcg tablets supplied in Australia, and the SSSI allows a pharmacist to dispense an equivalent quantity of clonidine 100mcg tablets, if considered appropriate for the patient, without a new prescription.

"It is important to note that inadvertent overdose may occur if the tablet is inaccurately split," the TGA stated, adding that in some cases, "alternative treatments other than substitution may be more appropriate."

Pharmacists are then required to advise the prescriber of the substitution as soon as possible.

Research published last year (*PD* 12 Nov 2025) revealed that more than 3,000 Australians were poisoned by ADHD medications in 2023, with clonidine among the most commonly implicated drugs.

The following brands of 100mcg clonidine tablets are expected to remain available during the shortage of Catapres 150mcg tablets: Catapres 100mcg, APO Clonidine 100mcg, and Clonidine Lupin 100mcg.

Clonidine tablets are used for essential hypertension and renal hypertension, with the drug also used off-label for conditions including ADHD, chronic pain and cancer pain.

See more on the SSSI [HERE](#).

PSA, AdPha urge swift action on programs

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) have thrown their full support behind all recommendations of the Deloitte Pharmacy Programs Cost Effectiveness Review's Final Report, which was released by the Australian Government at the end of last year.

Undertaken by Deloitte on behalf of the Australian Government, the review makes eight recommendations for reform of pharmacist-led programs to improve cost effectiveness and sustainability.

Among the key recommendations proposed are the removal of caps to providers of Home Medicines Reviews (HMRs), the introduction of increased program flexibility, alternate funding mechanisms to incentivise service provision in rural and remote communities and the introduction of effective evaluation frameworks which include quality outcome indicators.

"Removing unnecessary caps and modernising program rules will help ensure consumers can access timely, high-quality medication reviews, while preserving professional judgement

and enabling care to be tailored to individual patient needs," said AdPha President Associate Professor Tom Simpson.

"We support a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that is proportionate, draws on existing data and focuses squarely on quality and patient outcomes - not volume for volume's sake."

Assoc Prof Simpson welcomed the review's recognition that funding must reflect the complexity, time and location of care.

"Scaled remuneration is essential to support rural communities and patients with complex needs, and must be implemented without eroding existing rural funding," he said.

The PSA's Associate Professor Fei Sim applauded the report's recommendations, saying they are "vindication for Australian pharmacists who have been calling out for reform to these programs for many years".

"It recognises measures such as HMR caps mean consultant pharmacists are unable to make a full-time living from this life-saving work," she said.

"Every recommendation is important, and PSA encourages the



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government to implement them all.

"This report provides a blueprint for programs reform," Assoc Prof Sim concluded.

PSA's pharmacy agreements lead negotiator Associate Professor Shane Jackson concurred, noting the report provided a clear pathway to reform.

"The review's recommendations reinforce PSA's long-held position on pharmacist program reforms," he said.

"We will be using the upcoming budget processes to progress reforms through the First Pharmacy Programs Agreement, which have now been backed by the government's own review.

"These reforms need to happen, and they need to happen as soon as possible," Associate Professor Jackson concluded. *KB*

New Year ushers in "historic" PBS prescription price cut

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has welcomed the implementation of \$25 PBS prescriptions as at 01 Jan, noting the cost is the lowest it has been since 2004 for those without a concession card, and only the second time in history that the price of medicine in Australia has been reduced.

Guild National President Professor Trent Twomey said the change delivered big cost savings and would result in improved access to essential medicines.

"Every week, more than 400,000 prescriptions will now cost no more than \$25, putting up to \$6.60 back in patients' pockets for every prescription," Prof Twomey said.

"It makes medicine the most

affordable it's ever been."

The cost of PBS prescriptions for people with concession cards remains at \$7.70.

Professor Twomey stressed the importance of the price reduction for the health system.

"We know that delaying or rationing medicines can lead to worsening conditions, higher hospital admissions, and greater strain on the health system.

"When people skip medicines because they can't afford them, the whole health system suffers.

"Cutting the PBS co-payment to \$25 is the right call - it removes a major barrier to treatment."

Early last year, the Guild was joined by more than 20 health and community stakeholder groups in calling for PBS

medicines to be more affordable.

Research at the time showed that more than one in five patients without a concession card had skipped a prescription in the past three years because of cost, rising to one in three in regional areas.

New data released at the end of 2025 showed this still to be the case, with nearly four million Australians skipping prescriptions in the past three years due to cost-of-living pressures.

The research, which was based on a survey of over 3,300 people conducted by Insightfully in Oct-Nov 2025, also found that 17% of patients without a concession card reported being unable to afford their medicines, up 6% since 2022.



Dispensary Corner

VIETNAM has decided to adopt the same new year's resolution that so many of us have no doubt already set for ourselves: to reduce sugar intake.

In a bid to improve public health, the country's government has announced it will implement a tax on sweet drinks and alcohol.

From 2027, soft drinks with more than five grams of sugar per 100 millilitres, like classic Coca Cola and popular energy drinks, will be taxed 8%, before increasing to 10% in 2028.

Dairy drinks, natural fruit juices, coconut water, and nutritional supplements used for liquid diets will be exempt from the new fee.

Additionally, the 65% tax currently on beer and drinks with 20% or more alcohol (ABV) will increase by 5% in 2027 and then continue to rise every year until it reaches 90% in 2031.

What better motivator to cut down on the liquid calories than for the sake of your wallet, if not your health?

Amcal+ opens in South Yarra



AMCAL+ has opened its newest pharmacy at the Como Centre in South Yarra, offering a full suite of health, beauty and wellness services in the iconic Melbourne precinct.

Amcal+ Como features the Ultra Beauty "store within a store", providing customers with a curated range of luxury fragrances and high-end makeup, skincare and haircare products alongside everyday pharmacy needs.

Following last year's merger between Sigma Healthcare and Chemist Warehouse, revitalising and expanding the iconic Amcal+ brand has become a key priority

for the group, with the South Yarra opening marking an important milestone in the brand's continued growth across Australia.

"We're thrilled to bring Amcal+ to the Como Centre," said Tony Bassaly (pictured left), Amcal+ General Manager Franchise Brands.

"Our mission is to make healthcare accessible and affordable while delivering the trusted advice our customers depend on.

"South Yarra is a vibrant community, and we look forward to supporting locals with expert care, tailored services, and an exceptional pharmacy experience."

CDC Director appointed

PROFESSOR Zoe Wainer has been appointed Director General of Australia's Centre for Disease Control, a move welcomed by the Australia Medical Association (AMA) as "flag bearer" in calling for an Australian CDC.

Professor Wainer is an experienced clinician and the current Deputy Secretary of the Victorian Department of Health, and brings a wealth of experience both locally and internationally to the role.

In welcoming her appointment, AMA Vice President Assoc Prof Julian Rait noted that Professor Wainer played a key role in overseeing Victoria's response to the COVID pandemic, and led major reforms in environmental health and women's health, including representing Australia at the UN Convention on the Status of Women.

The Australian CDC officially launched on 01 Jan, and will play a key role in bringing together science with real time monitoring of diseases, helping prepare for the next pandemic.

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