

# MEDIA STATEMENT

4 March 2026



## **Put patients first: Senate must back common-sense PBS parity for podiatry**

The Australian Podiatry Association (APodA) is calling on senators to put patients first, ease cost-of-living pressure, and support a simple amendment to ensure people treated by podiatrists endorsed to prescribe medicines can access PBS subsidies.

With the *Health Legislation Amendment (Prescribing of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Bill 2025* set to return to the Senate, a rare window of opportunity exists to fix a longstanding anomaly to ensure podiatrists are not left as the only legally endorsed and highly-regulated prescribers in Australia whose patients can't access the PBS while the bill is before Parliament.

APodA CEO Hilary Shelton said the issue was straightforward: patients should not be forced to pay more, wait longer, see their condition worsen, risk avoidable hospitalisation - or even worse, amputation - simply because of which qualified clinician they saw.

"This is a simple, common-sense reform for the Senate while this bill is before Parliament, that puts patients first," Ms Shelton said.

"When an endorsed podiatrist prescribes within their legal scope, patients should be able to access the PBS price, just as they can when the same medicine is prescribed by other authorised clinicians."

"Right now, patients are either paying full private cost at the pharmacy or booking additional GP appointments just to access the same medicines at the subsidised rate. That is not only unfair on patients, but also unnecessary pressure on the health system during a cost-of-living crisis."

The Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee report recommended the nurse PBS amendment be passed, but also referenced the 20-plus submissions calling for podiatrists to be included.

The Australian Greens' additional comments in the report support the APodA stance: "Podiatrists and podiatric surgeons are currently endorsed prescribers, meaning that they are fully qualified and permitted to prescribe medicines to patients."

The Greens also noted the key inequity now facing patients: "Despite this, they are not permitted to access PBS benefits for these prescriptions, meaning that their patients are paying full price for medicines that are otherwise subsidised by the PBS."

Ms Shelton said that acknowledgement reflects exactly what podiatrists and patients experience on the ground, and many of these case studies are contained in the committee submissions.

"Too often, we see patients' health decline because they cannot get a private prescription filled promptly, cannot afford the medicine at the full non-PBS price, or cannot afford the time and cost of returning to a GP simply to obtain the same prescription at the subsidised rate," Ms Shelton said.

"That delay can mean conditions worsen, infections progress, and patients become sicker than they need to be, with some ultimately ending up in hospital, which places even more strain on an already overburdened health system.

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“The solution is straightforward: enable endorsed podiatrists, who are regulated by the Podiatry Board of Australia under Ahpra and have been prescribing under state and territory legislation for nearly two decades, to provide patients with access to PBS-subsidised medicines within their existing scope.

“This is not about expanding scope of practice - it is about allowing patients to access lower-cost medicines from clinicians who are already trained, authorised and regulated to prescribe within a tightly controlled scope.”

APoDA said fixing the anomaly would not only save patients money but would also save taxpayer dollars by reducing avoidable duplication in the health system, and in the Parliament, by passing an additional amendment for endorsed podiatrists while the nurses bill is still on the table.

“If the Senate supports this practical amendment, it can reduce duplication, improve timely access to treatment, and save both patients and taxpayers money, which is the very definition of sensible reform,” said Ms Shelton

**The Australian Greens’ additional comments in the report conclude: “This bill is an opportunity to correct this disparity and provide podiatrists and podiatric surgeons the ability to access PBS benefits when they prescribe medicines to their patients.”**

APoDA is now urging senators to act on that logic and vote in favour of an amendment when the bill returns to the Senate.

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