

MEDIA RELEASE

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Senate backs PBS reform to help patients access cheaper medicines

The Australian Podiatry Association (APodA) congratulates the Senators who backed cheaper medicines for Australians by passing the PBS prescribing amendment through the Senate today, despite the Federal Government failing to support the reform.

Sponsored by Senator Jacqui Lambie, the amendment now heads to the House of Representatives where, if passed, it will allow endorsed podiatrists to prescribe Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines within their scope of practice, helping patients access cheaper medicines without unnecessary delays, extra appointments or added costs.

The reform is expected to particularly benefit vulnerable Australians, including veterans, pensioners, people living with disability, and those living in regional and rural communities with limited healthcare access.

APodA CEO Hilary Shelton said the Senate vote was a win for patients, common-sense healthcare reform and the efficient use of Australia's healthcare workforce.

"We congratulate Senator Jacqui Lambie for her sponsorship of the amendment, and the senators who supported this amendment, for recognising that Australians deserve faster and more affordable access to the medicines they need," Ms Shelton said.

"Endorsed podiatrists have been safely prescribing medicines for about 20 years, yet they remain the only authorised prescribers excluded from the PBS. This long-overdue reform removes that anomaly, making it easier for patients to access affordable medicines without unnecessary GP visits."

Ms Shelton said APodA was disappointed the Federal Government did not support the amendment, despite healthcare accessibility and affordability being central to its policy agenda.

"It is disappointing the Government did not support a reform designed to improve healthcare access, reduce costs for patients and ease pressure on the healthcare system," Ms Shelton said.

"At a time when Australians are struggling with a cost-of-living crisis and healthcare accessibility, this is a practical reform focused on better patient outcomes and more affordable medicines.

"However, we look forward to continuing to work constructively with the Government as this reform progresses to the House of Representatives, and to securing support for the next stage of this important healthcare reform."

Endorsed podiatrists have been prescribing medicines safely for nearly 20 years under strict state and territory regulation and oversight through the Podiatry Board of Australia and Ahpra.

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APodA said the reform would also help reduce pressure on Australia’s strained primary healthcare system by cutting unnecessary duplication and freeing up GP appointments for more complex care.

Ms Shelton said the passage of the amendment through the Senate was also a landmark moment for the profession.

“This is a historic moment for podiatry in Australia and recognition of the advanced training, regulation and expertise of endorsed podiatrists,” she said.

“Today’s result acknowledges that endorsed podiatrists are highly regulated prescribers who are already safely delivering this care every day.

“We especially thank Senator Jacqui Lambie for her leadership, determination and advocacy throughout this process. Senator Lambie understood this reform was about helping everyday Australians access cheaper medicines and better healthcare.”

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