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CONSUMER VOICES

CHF
Consumers Health
Forum of Australia

News and views of health consumers - 15 Mar 2024

CEO update

Yesterday, the Australian Government announced that it has reached a 'Heads of Agreement' with The Pharmacy Guild about the 8th Community Pharmacy Agreement (8CPA).

The Community Pharmacy Agreement sets out the terms between the government and pharmacists to reimburse them for dispensing subsidised medicines on the PBS and to run community pharmacy medication management programs and services.

The Heads of Agreement essentially provides a framework to agree the rest of the terms of a contract as it nears finalisation.

One of the main points of the 8CPA is that community pharmacists will receive an extra \$3 billion through the agreement, or about \$600 million more each year. The Government has said some of this new funding will go into cheaper medicines.

We know through our Consumer Survey on Community Pharmacy published last year that consumers value their local pharmacy, but CHF is mindful that every dollar of taxpayer's money used to underwrite these essentially private businesses are dollars not directly helping Australians with cost-of-living pressures.

We think it's really important that when the 8CPA does start, the government makes a strong effort to ensure that the public is educated about what the agreement is and how it will benefit consumers, as well as fully explaining how the extra \$3 billion is being spent to benefit consumers.

Federal Health Minister Mark Butler has sent out [a media release](#) today and The [Sydney Morning Herald/The Age](#) have reported on today's announcement.



Elizabeth Deveny
CEO

Royal Commission into COVID-19

This week a Senate Inquiry into the scope of a Royal Commission into COVID-19 took place with CHF representing consumers. In our statement we said we support a full Royal Commission, while acknowledging the work being done under the COVID Response Inquiry is distinctly separate.

We [called for the Royal Commission](#) to actively seek consumer participation as primary sources of evidence, ensuring that it is meaningful, that the language used is direct and clear, and that submission timelines allow for effective collaboration between State and Federal-based consumer groups. Watch the [recording here \(cue to 2:30 pm\)](#).

Private health insurance costs

The Federal Government announced an average increase to private health insurance premiums of just over three per cent. Consumers tell us they take out private health insurance to make sure they get the health care they need when they need it and avoid public health wait lists.

With this new price rise, some people will reconsider the cost of health insurance. This will flow on to added burden on the public system. If you have a story to share about what increased private health premiums means to you and would like to share it, please email communications@chf.org.au.

Ozempic popularity causes supply issue

Earlier this month, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) shared its concern with stakeholders that the amount off-brand versions of Ozempic (semaglutide) produced by compounding pharmacists was unregulated and could be unsafe for patients.

We raised our concerns about the supply shortage of Ozempic, widely used as medication for managing blood sugar levels in patients with type 2 diabetes. In the media we stressed the patient safety should be at the heart of these discussions. [Read our media release](#).

Webinars

Last week we held two webinars of interest to consumers. The replays are available on our website and on our [You Tube channel](#).



Climate change and health

The health and wellbeing of all Australians deeply entwined with the climate and environment. In recognition of this, the Federal Government of Australia has released its first [National Climate and Health Strategy](#). Hear more about the Strategy from the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ged Kearney MP, and from climate and health campaigners and advocates Emma Bacon and Dr Aletha Ward. Facilitated by CHF CEO, Elizabeth Deveny.

[Watch the replay](#)

Unleashing the potential within: the Scope of Practice Review.



In 2023, the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report recommended that governments (State, Territory, and the Commonwealth) work together to review the barriers and incentives for primary health care professionals working to their full scope of practice.

This review is underway, and the first stage has been completed. In this webinar, the independent lead reviewer, Professor Mark Cormack gives a presentation on the research undertaken to date, and the next steps.

[Watch the replay](#)

Consumer panel

There is an opportunity for 6 – 10 consumers who have lived experience with **Life Support Equipment at Home**. Consumers who need certified Life Support Equipment or are the primary carer of someone who does, are invited to join an advisory panel with the Energy Charter.

The [Energy Charter](#) is a CEO-led collaboration of like-minded energy organisations with a shared purpose and passion for customers and communities and includes retailers, distribution and network businesses in the energy sector.

[For more](#)



Other news

The Health Technology Assessment Review

The [Health Technology Assessment Policy and Methods Review](#) evaluates the approval processes for new drugs and novel medical technologies. The goal of this review is to regularly ensure that assessment processes keep pace with rapid advances in health technologies and that barriers to access are minimised.

The latest Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Review began last April and Consumers Health Forum has participated in the consultation process, with a [submission in Consultation 1](#) in June 2023, and published our CHF [submission for Consultation 2](#) this week, after consultation with Special Interest Group members, consumer groups and other experts. We expect the final recommendations of the review to be published on 15 April 2024.

[About the Review](#)

Health Technology Assessment: Co-design Working Group

A consumer-led Co-design Working Group (CWG) has been considering how to capture consumer and patient perspectives earlier in the medicines listing process conducted by the HTA.

You can participate in this by reading a consultation document and completing a survey.

[For more](#)

Member update

Share your diabetes story, for subsidised monitoring technology

[Diabetes Australia](#) is advocating for expanded access to continuous glucose monitoring technology (CGM) for people with Type 2 diabetes who would benefit from it the most. If this impacts you, share your story to help spark change.

For more

In the media



Media roundup

- [TGA investigating telehealth websites prescribing nicotine vaping products](#) | The Guardian, Tues 12 March 2023
- [Pharmacies making copycat Ozempic could face a ban — what does it mean for custom weight loss drugs?](#) | ABC, 1 March 2023

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