

# MEDIA RELEASE

**Thursday 10 August 2023**

## **Coalition putting cheaper medicines at risk and showing callous disregard for consumers**

The federal Coalition's decision, along with One Nation and Senator David Van, to pursue a disallowance motion on 60-day dispensing of certain medicines shows a callous disregard for consumers facing cost-of-living pressures.

Australian Medical Association President Professor Robson said the decision to move the motion in the Senate clearly showed the signatories to this had buckled under an irresponsible scare campaign by those opposed to the measures.

"Let me be clear, this policy was recommended by an independent expert body — the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) — because it is safe and has enormous benefits to the community," Professor Robson said.

"It saves consumers money, and it frees up GP time, which the health system desperately needs.

"This capitulation to an irresponsible and orchestrated scare campaign is beyond disappointing, because it will prevent consumers saving up to \$180 per year on selected Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme funded medicines."

Professor Robson said it was ground hog day for the Coalition, which had previously agreed to proceed with this recommendation in 2019 only to cave into pressure from Pharmacy owners.

While the Coalition said at the time that it would continue to consult about this change, Pharmacy owners used this delay to effectively kill off the recommendation.

This policy proposal has been on the table since 2019 and, despite previous consultation, has been opposed at every turn by Pharmacy owners who continue to pursue profits at the expense of patients,

"60-day dispensing would deliver significant benefits for patients and the health system. By making medications more affordable, patients will be more likely to get their prescriptions filled and take these medications as required. Better medication compliance keeps people well and lightens the load on our health system, particularly our hospitals.

"From a workforce perspective, the policy means fewer visits to a GP, freeing up appointments for other patients and supporting GPs to spend more time with those patients that have more complex health care needs."

The Coalition is leading efforts to block this measure and drive up medicine costs for patients, which follows a history of cuts to health funding while in government, including the extended Medicare freeze, had undeniably led to increased out-of-pocket costs for patients.

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Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 [media@ama.com.au](mailto:media@ama.com.au)

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“At a time when many people are struggling with cost-of-living pressures, blocking 60 day dispensing means that they are intent on having patients continue to absorb unnecessary financial pain with all the negative consequences this brings in terms of access to health care.”

Patients have waited long enough for cheaper medicines and should no longer be left at the mercy of Pharmacy owners. The Senate needs to pass these changes now, confident that the upcoming Community Pharmacy Agreement negotiations will provide an opportunity to address any genuine issues that might arise, in stark contrast the current scare campaign.

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Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 [media@ama.com.au](mailto:media@ama.com.au)



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