



KEY ISSUES FOR RURAL AND REMOTE PHARMACY

Supporting equity of access

April 2019

The community pharmacy sector provides a highly qualified and skilled health professional workforce that can help to address problems of access to health services experienced by some 7 million Australians living in regional, rural and remote areas.

But community pharmacies are themselves struggling with workforce shortages and workforce distribution inequities on top of problems with accessing appropriately funded training and services. These issues compound the challenges these community pharmacies have in providing services to a population with high rates of chronic disease, lower health literacy and socioeconomic status – all of which require more time to be spent with patients to ensure quality health outcomes.

Rural community pharmacies can help to achieve equity of access for patients to culturally safe primary healthcare services in rural, regional and remote Australia with the support as follows.

Access to primary health care services

Greater access to medicines and professional pharmacist services

- Funding to enable rural and remote community pharmacies to employ second pharmacist to provide primary health care services and medicine management activities. This pharmacist may be shared in a flexible arrangement amongst other pharmacies in surrounding communities.
- Community pharmacist specific workforce incentive to attract experienced pharmacists to work in rural and remote regions including relocation assistance, travel allowance and rural loading based on remoteness.
- Changes to better support access to essential medicines in emergencies through expanded state and territory emergency supply and Commonwealth continued dispensing arrangements.

Telehealth

- Capital grants to implement telehealth technology infrastructure in rural pharmacies to support inter-professional collaboration and community to access doctors, specialists, and pre and post tertiary hospital assessment and education.
- Medicare eligibility for telehealth services to support equitable access and reduce financial barriers for patients who live in towns where there is no GP available (or after hours GP services available).

National Secretariat

Level 2, 15 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600
PO Box 310, Fyshwick ACT 2609
P: +61 2 6270 1888 • F: +61 2 6270 1800 • E: guild.nat@guild.org.au
www.guild.org.au



Workforce incentives

HECS debt waived for students from rural Australia

- A HECS/HELP reimbursement scheme should be developed for pharmacy graduates who undertake their intern placement and remain working in rural and remote locations in the immediate post-intern year.

Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP)

- Funding to universities for a 25 per cent quota of Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) for pharmacy students from rural and regional Australia.

Attracting Students and Interns to rural Australia

- Equitable access to funding opportunities for student placements as part of the University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH), with support to the community pharmacies that factors in the time cost to single pharmacist community pharmacies providing student placements in remote areas.

Migration support

Waiver of application fees for employers to sponsor overseas pharmacists on temporary skill shortage (TSS) visas if the domestic market cannot meet the recruitment need.

Culturally safe services

Cultural education and mentoring

- Seed funding to develop a community pharmacy specific, cultural education and locally based cultural mentoring program to enhance access and the quality use of medicines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

Enhanced Medicines Enablement Program

- An enhanced community pharmacy medicines enablement program available for all patients of remote Aboriginal Health Services across Australia, funded directly to community pharmacy through an expanded Section 100 RAAHS Support Allowance program.