

Prescriptions via telehealth – state and territory rules

30 April 2020

As part of the National Health Plan, Australian governments are fast-tracking [electronic prescribing](#). Work to upgrade healthcare providers' clinical software is well underway, and is expected to be ready by May 2020. See our [fact sheet on the fast-tracking measure](#).

Interim arrangements for prescriptions

In the meantime, there are immediate options available for patients to receive medicines via telehealth services. We call this 'image-based supply of medicine'.

Most states and territories have now made provisions for image-based supply of medicine within their legal frameworks. Health care professionals should consider state and territory rules in relation to prescribing and supply of medicines, including image-based supply of medicine.

Individual state and territory arrangements

Australian Capital Territory

Existing legislation in the ACT allows all medicines to be [supplied by electronic prescription or digital image](#).

The ACT automatically enables the Commonwealth Special Arrangement under the [Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008](#). Prescribers can use image-based prescribing for Appendix D and Schedule 8 medicines in the ACT. This supports telehealth consultations and prescribing of essential medicines for all vulnerable patients in the community.

The [DORA real time prescription monitoring system](#) is also available in the ACT to support patient care using a Schedule 8 medicine.

New South Wales

New South Wales now allows access to most medicines based on an image of the prescription, except Schedule 8 medicines and Schedule 4 Appendix D. NSW does not permit a digital signature, nor use of text message.

See more information about image-based prescriptions in NSW for:

- [pharmacists](#)
- [prescribers](#)

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory allows all Schedule 4 medicines to be supplied by image-based prescribing, excluding Schedule 8 medicines and Schedule 4 Appendix D.

Queensland

Queensland does not currently allow image-based prescribing.

South Australia

In South Australia, an exemption to the Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011 was [gazetted on 16 April 2020](#). This allows access to most Schedule 4 medicines using the image of a prescription. Schedule 8 and Schedule 4 Appendix D medicines cannot be accessed this way.

For more information see [emergency supply and prescribing medicines](#) on the SA Health site.

Tasmania

Tasmania allows supply of most Schedule 4 medicines except for Schedule 8 narcotic substances and Schedule 4 declared restricted substances.

See more information about image-based prescriptions in Tasmania for:

- [pharmacists](#)
- [prescribers](#)

Victoria

In Victoria, a [new emergency order](#) allows access to medicines using the image of a prescription. This excludes Schedule 8 drugs and Schedule 4 drugs of dependence (Schedule 11 of the Victorian [Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981](#)).

Victoria does not adopt Appendix D of the Commonwealth Poisons Standard. The list of substances in Victoria Schedule 11 of Vic DPCS Act is less restrictive than Appendix D. Key S4 restricted substances for community pharmacy are:

- benzodiazepines
- anabolic steroids
- pseudoephedrine
- phentermine

It does not include tramadol, pregabalin, gabapentin, z-drugs, retinoids, reproductive medicines or S4 codeine preparations.

Western Australia

In Western Australia, all Schedule 4 medicines can be [accessed using the image of a prescription](#). No Schedule 8 medicines can be accessed this way.