



strokefoundation

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## RE: PHARMACY REMUNERATION AND REGULATION REVIEW

To who it may concern,

The Stroke Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation working across the stroke journey, supporting stroke survivors, carers, health professionals, governments and the public to reduce the impact of stroke on the Australian community. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this review.

Having worked directly with community pharmacies to deliver health checks across Australia since 2007, the Stroke Foundation views pharmacies as an important setting for both primary and secondary prevention activities.

Whether information provided is related to wellness and prevention, disease and medicine management or population health activities, the pharmacy environment provides a valuable opportunity for people to better understand and manage their health. Our consumers tell us that being proactive in the management of medications is crucial to the recovery process but also to reducing the risk of recurrent stroke. It is the view of the Stroke Foundation that where health related information and support is provided to consumers by pharmacists, it should be done in a responsible, evidence based and nationally consistent manner which maintains privacy. It may be appropriate for checks and balances to be in place to support this principle.

The Stroke Foundation's health promotion program works with corporate and community organisations, particularly pharmacies to run opportunistic health checks across Australia. This program has resulted in a large number of health checks being conducted and a significant referral rate of potentially high risk patients to their General Practitioner (GP). The health checks are conducted by suitably qualified health professionals and include blood pressure, cardiovascular disease risk assessment and an Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment questionnaire (AUSDRISK). The program focuses on people aged 45 and over and aims to reach those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Since 2007, more than 750,000 people have been checked. On average, our data indicates that 7% of those checked will have high blood pressure (>140/90 mm Hg) or a high diabetes score, placing them in the 'high risk' category for stroke. Of those identified as being in the 'high risk' category for stroke, 60% are referred to their GP. The remainder are referred to lifestyle modification and change programs or activities.

In addition to their important work in primary prevention, community pharmacists play a vital role in dispensing medicines. It is appropriate that pharmacists' obligations regarding the dispensing of medicines are clearly defined<sup>1</sup> and that remuneration arrangements support pharmacists to meet their professional responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines.aspx>



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Data collected as part of the Stroke Foundation National Acute Audit (2015)<sup>2</sup> found a third of patients diagnosed with ischemic stroke, and more than a third of patients diagnosed with atrial fibrillation were not discharged on recommended secondary prevention medication. Community pharmacists can play a role in identifying where gaps in medicine management and compliance may be occurring and should be encouraged to refer these patients back to their GP for advice. We believe that pharmacists should be appropriately supported and encouraged to fulfil this role in secondary stroke prevention.

Deloitte Access economics analysis commissioned by the Stroke Foundation<sup>3</sup> has found a higher incidence of stroke across many parts of rural and remote Australia. There are many issues faced by stroke survivors in rural and remote areas, including transport and availability of specialist stroke facilities. Providing mechanisms that enable early detection of risk factors for stroke so that preventative action can be taken at the earliest opportunity is vital to reducing the impact of stroke on the Australian community. Equitable access to pharmacy services for everyone, regardless of location is important to the health and well-being of all people in Australia, and any regulatory changes that risk diluting current access to community pharmacy services should be treated with caution.

It is the view of the Stroke Foundation that improved coordination and collaboration between community pharmacists and GPs would increase opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians. Greater cooperation between representative bodies in helping to build constructive relationships between the two sectors should be encouraged.

The Stroke Foundation looks forward to examining the Review Panel's draft recommendations when they are released as part of an interim report later this year.

Yours sincerely,

**Sharon McGowan**  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>2</sup> <https://informme.org.au/en/stroke-data/Acute-audits>

<sup>3</sup> <https://strokefoundation.com.au/What-we-do/Research/No-postcode-untouched>