

MEDIA RELEASE

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HRA Welcomes Pharmacy Guild Support

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) Co-Founder, Annie Madden AO and HRA President & Co-Founder, Gino Vumbaca have welcomed the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's 2021-22 Pre-Budget Submission calling for long overdue reforms to the Opioid Dependence Treatment (ODT) Program and its discrimination against people needing this program.

On [1 January 2020](#) the Health Minister announced the '*easing of the financial burden*' on patients managing chronic conditions by reducing the concessional PBS safety by 12 scripts from \$390.00 to \$316.80 and the general PBS safety net from \$1550.70 to \$1486.80.

However, the Government eased the burden for every person in Australia except the tens of thousands of people who rely on subsidised access to treatments for opioid dependence.

The current system precludes access to the PBS safety net for the cost of these medicines and further denies people in need of these treatments the protection afforded to every other PBS consumer by allowing an uncapped dispensing charge which does not count towards their safety net.

Programs such as the staged supply program to assist with reducing the risk of dependence associated with high-risk medications are also specifically denied to people on the ODT Program.

This 30-year discrimination against some of the most financially and socially disadvantaged members in our community is simply unjustifiable.

With the increasing expertise of community pharmacy to support people managing their ODT medications, State and Territory Governments have rightly encouraged people to access their medicines through this network. Community pharmacy provides access to a trusted clinician and support for the management and co-ordination of other medications they may be taking.

Accordingly, HRA welcomes the Guild's Submission supporting our calls for reform as part of the 2020-21 Federal Budget and as part of the current consultation process on the Legislative Instrument that as of 1 February 2021 seeks to enshrine this discrimination once again against people with an opioid dependence.

As described in [our Budget submission](#), all people on the ODT Program deserve the protection of the PBS safety net, they also all deserve the protection of programs designed to minimise the risks of drug dependence by making:

- ✓ Medicines on the ODT program dual s100 and s85 listed so they can be subject to a PBS co-payment and count towards the PBS safety net.
- ✓ The Staged Supply program to include the staged supply of ODT.
- ✓ Recognition of the capacity of GPs to administer injectables on the ODT program and treat their reimbursement processes consistent with other injectables on the PBS.
- ✓ Trial the administration of injectable treatments in the pharmacy setting with a fee for service met by either the Federal or State & Territory Governments consistent with their vaccination program fees (MRFF program)

HRA will continue to offer solutions to government and work constructively with governments and the sector to achieve equality but surely after 30 years of unjustified discrimination against people with an opioid dependence seeking medications, changes should be a matter of when and no longer why.

Contact: Annie Madden AO of Harm Reduction Australia on 0414-628-136

Harm Reduction Australia is a national organisation for individuals committed to reducing the health, social and economic harms potentially associated with drug use. HRA takes a non-judgmental approach to drug use within society and recognises the key role people with current and past drug use experience must play in any effective drug policy solutions. As well as working collaboratively to ensure reform to current drug policy with the primary aims of ending imprisonment, stigmatisation, discrimination and human rights violations against the people who use or have used drugs.

We are dedicated to reducing the harmful impact of drug use in Australia through evidence-based, sensible and safer drug policies.



www.harmreductionaustralia.org.au