

Government pledge on access to medicines welcomed

A Federal Government pledge today that consumer choice will not be affected by whatever decisions are made on reforming the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme has been welcomed by Medicines Australia.

The statement by the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, that patients would still have access to the innovative medicines they need was very positive, said the Chief Executive Officer of Medicines Australia, Kieran Schneemann.

“We are aware that the Government is considering a number of proposals to reform the PBS. Medicines Australia believes that we need a sustainable system for the future which can adjust to a new environment where more than 80 medicines are coming off patent over the next five years,” Mr Schneemann said.

As the Opposition’s spokeswoman for health, Julia Gillard, said today, PBS growth has slowed significantly because of a range of Government measures which have delivered significant cost savings.

“If the Government is going to introduce the sort of significant reform that has been reported in the media in recent weeks, it is essential there is wide consultation with Pharmacy, consumer and health community groups and the pharmaceutical industry.

“Otherwise, the scheme may not end up being sustainable and the viability of Pharmacy and the pharmaceutical industry could be threatened.

“Mr Abbott’s comment today that ‘there is absolutely no risk that people will miss out on the drugs they need’ is reassuring, as was his view that Australia would not go down the discredited path of limiting the availability of drugs as has been seen in New Zealand,” Mr Schneemann said.

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