

Consumers to have more say on medicine access issues

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Consumer involvement in Australia's medicines choices has been further strengthened under a new strategic agreement Medicines Australia has signed with the Federal Government.

The Consumers Health Forum welcomes the acknowledgement in the agreement that the Government and Medicines Australia have a common interest in patients having improved involvement in the decision-making for medicines access, the CEO of CHF, Leanne Wells, said today.

"We welcome the statement by Medicines Australia that the agreement heralds a new era by securing stronger patient involvement in critical processes and ensuring Australia keeps pace with access to rapidly transforming medical advancements developed around the world.

"This agreement also provides for more certainty of Government funding for new drugs. This is vital for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme which aims at ensuring all Australians have affordable access to quality medication.

"It is important consumers have an influential role in determining policies governing access to quality medicines and associated technology now increasingly part of modern therapy.

"The agreement means patients will have a role in the first independent review of Australia's health technology assessment system in nearly 30 years. As well the agreement provides for a new process to incorporate patients' views and experiences early in the processes of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) which recommends to Government what new drugs should be subsidised.

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“The PBAC membership already includes two consumer representatives, and the new changes are a welcome step in reflecting the increased use and complexity of technology, such as wearable devices, in the administration of modern medicine.

““The new Enhanced Consumer Engagement process strengthens consumer involvement in decisions concerning new technologies and medicine innovations, particularly relating to those patients with high unmet needs. It will consider patient-defined needs at the start of the PBAC process, rather than towards the end, which the agreement states will drive further efficiencies in access to medicines.

“The agreement covers other important provisions including conditional earlier access to new drugs, measures to reduce supply chain shortages and the Government’s commitments on savings and investments which should provide at least \$5 billion over four years for investment in new drugs.

“The agreement strengthens CHF’s capacity to consult with and support Medicines Australia in our shared mission to bring the latest in evidence-based and cost-effective medications to Australia,” Ms Wells said.

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