



2 December 2014

## Media release

### Guild welcomes new conditions of approval for Approved Pharmacists

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia welcomes new measures which ensure that pharmacists only claim for PBS medicines dispensed from premises which have been approved by Government.

Through information provided by the Guild and other sources the Department of Health had become aware of a small number of instances where approved pharmacists appeared to be claiming for the supply of pharmaceutical benefits where the supply was not made at or from approved premises.

The new measures are in the form of amendments to the *National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) (Conditions of approval for approved pharmacists) Determination 2007*, effective from 1 December 2014.

The *National Health Act 1953* allows for payment of a claim for the supply of a pharmaceutical benefit where the supply has been made at or from premises for which a pharmacist is approved under the Act. An approved pharmacist is a pharmacist who is approved under Part VII of the Act to supply pharmaceutical benefits at particular premises (approved premises).

The Act also provides that payment to an approved pharmacist for the supply of a pharmaceutical benefit cannot be made if it was supplied at or from unapproved premises, or otherwise than in accordance with a condition of approval.

To emphasise the importance of making a correct claim, an additional condition has now been added. The new condition states that an approved pharmacist must not make a claim for payment for the supply of a pharmaceutical benefit unless the pharmaceutical benefit was supplied at or from the pharmacist's approved premises.

A breach of the conditions of approval can be deemed an 'abuse' of approval and may lead to an investigation by a Pharmaceutical Services Federal Committee of Inquiry. Such an investigation may result in the suspension or revocation of the pharmacist's approval.

This measure is an important support for pharmacists who were previously being undermined by a small number of pharmacists who claimed payment for dispensing Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines from unapproved premises.

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The Guild has supported and lobbied for this reinforcement of the law because approved pharmacies have invested in their businesses on the basis that PBS medicines will be dispensed only through approved pharmacies. The claiming of PBS payments on behalf of unapproved pharmacies undermines the integrity of the network and the viability of the model which provides timely access to PBS medicines for all Australian patients.

Anybody who has concerns about a potential breach of the Conditions of Approval for approved pharmacists, or any other compliance matter, can report their concerns to The Australian Government Services Fraud Tip-off Line by calling 131 524 or filling out the 'reporting suspected fraud' form at <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/forms/1980>

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