



The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia

affordable medicines now.

Member toolkit

**END THE
TOUGH
CHOICES**



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As pharmacists, you know the challenges many patients face in affording the medicines they need to stay healthy. Rising costs are forcing patients to make incredibly tough choices between medicine and other essentials such as rent, groceries and putting petrol in the car.

Affordable Medicines Now is our initiative to address this critical issue and ensure that all Australians can afford to access their essential medicines. As the 2025 federal election draws nearer, we're calling on the government to do more to support Australian patients by reducing the PBS co-payment.

This toolkit has been developed to help community pharmacists communicate with confidence, to engage with patients on the issue and to amplify key messages about what needs to be done to solve the problem.

In this toolkit, you will find:

- Information about why *Affordable Medicines Now* matters
- Patients' stories
- Our communication in action
- What you can do to help.

Get involved and help us more make affordable medicines a reality for every Australian — and end the tough choices.

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Why patients need *Affordable Medicines Now*

The cost-of-living crisis facing Australians continues to grow. When people are unable to afford rent, groceries, fuel and medicines, it forces them to make tough choices about what they can afford and what they will miss.

Medicines should never be a luxury item; not in a country as lucky as ours. Medicines are vital to health and when we don't have our health, everything else can fall apart.

In the past three years 21% of Australians—3.75M people— have been unable to afford prescription medicines because of cost. Skipped medicines can lead to worse health outcomes, hospital admissions and loss of income.

(Affordable Medicine Research Track 4 December 2024)

Australians most likely to go delay or go without medicine include those with long term illnesses, those with dependents, young Australians, women and people living in disadvantaged areas.

Children who miss medicine are at risk of the onset of otherwise preventable long-term health conditions and for adults it can mean reduced opportunities and increased time off work.

The government needs to do more to help people doing it tough by making essential medicines more affordable.

Reducing the cost of medicines PBS co-payment will help more than 12 million Australians who get more than one script each year. It will make it easier for those with long-term health conditions, like hypertension, diabetes and asthma to stay well and stay out of hospital.

No one should have to choose between food and medicines.

This isn't the Australia we want to be.

We need to do **better.**

Join us in calling on the government to do more to make medicines affordable and reduce the co-payment. It's one of the few actions the government can take to give immediate relief to struggling families across the country without adding inflationary pressure.

It will save people money, prevent additional healthcare costs and reduce pressure on our health system. Get involved and end the tough choices.

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Getting the message out

In the lead-up to the federal election, the Guild is running a multichannel communications effort to highlight the kinds of tough choices patients are facing. Our communication spans various platforms and strategies to ensure this important message reaches a wide audience and resonates with key stakeholders.



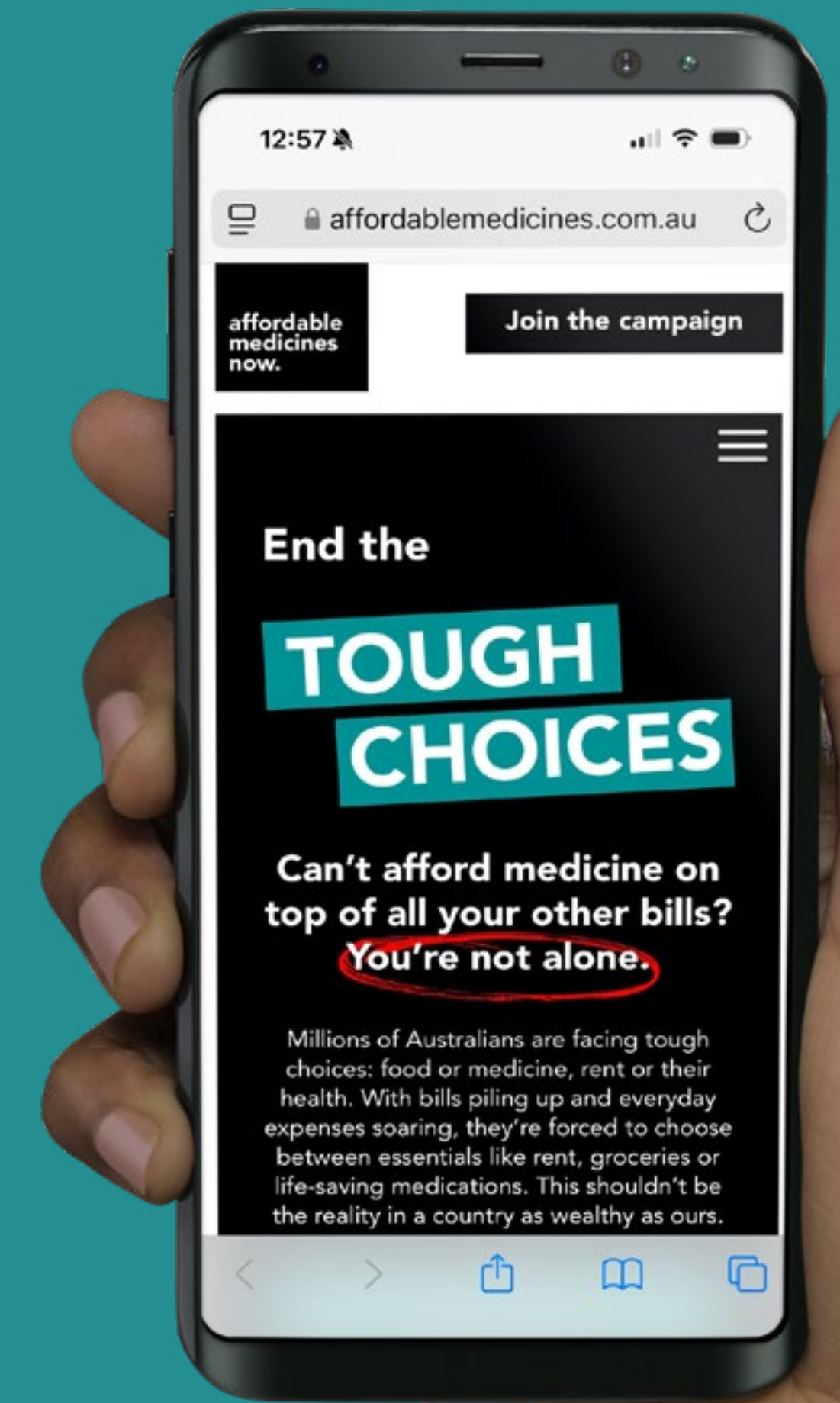
Digital:

We are leveraging social media, email newsletters, digital advertising and a fresh new website to share compelling stories and key messages. This digital push allows us to engage with a broad audience and encourage them to join our cause.



Out-of-home:

Our campaign includes impactful out-of-home advertising, such as billboards and public transport ads, to raise awareness among the general public. These visuals are strategically placed in high-traffic areas to maximise visibility.



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Print and broadcast media:

We are working closely with media outlets to secure coverage and amplify our message. Through press releases, radio ads, TV commercials, interviews, and opinion pieces, we aim to keep the issue of affordable medicines a priority in the public eye.



Government:

Engaging with government officials and policymakers is a crucial part of our strategy. We are advocating for policy changes and urging the government to take immediate action to reduce the cost of medicines.



Stakeholders:

Collaboration with key stakeholders, including pharmacists and other healthcare professionals, patient advocacy groups, and community organisations, is essential. By working together, we can build a strong coalition to support our campaign and drive meaningful change.



And of course, you:

Our member pharmacists are an important part of our communication efforts. We need your help gathering patient stories and telling your own. Utilising the digital resources provided will make sure the message gets out to many more people.



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Real stories, real impact

We know that many patients are facing significant difficulty affording their medicines. This issue is not just a statistic; it's a reality that affects lives every day. While these struggles are highlighted in the news and in our own research, it's personal stories that truly have the power to engage emotions and drive change. We need to hear from your patients about their experiences.

Storytelling is a powerful medium.

By sharing firsthand patient experiences—and your own as pharmacists who witness these challenges daily—you can help us advocate for more affordable medicines and make a real difference.

Your stories give a voice to the people behind the statistics. They show policymakers the real-world impact of medicine costs and help build momentum for meaningful change. Whether it's a patient choosing between essential medications and other basic needs, or a pharmacist seeing firsthand the tough decisions people make, these stories matter.

We need your help to bring these experiences to light. If you or your patients have a story to share, please get in touch. Every story counts!

Video stories will be shared on affordablemedicines.com.au and on our social media channels.

Below are some quotes from patients who have already shared their stories on social media and the affordablemedicines.com.au website.



Patients are sharing their stories

I have often had to get my medication on credit because I can't always afford them, then pay back the credit on Pension day. It is a struggle. Many medications are not covered on PBS and my health depends on those. I no longer have a car, or luxuries. Bare survival is all that I can manage.

Christine - Queensland

"I couldn't imagine my child being very ill & not being able to afford he's medicine, that's every parents worse nightmare!"

Gail - Australia

"When my kids need prescription medicines we often go without nutritious food to afford what they need to get better. It's a bloody joke."

Holly - Victoria

"I have had to scrounge enough to pay for medicine and some days have had to go without until I could afford to pay for it"

Anonymous - Victoria

"Our hospitals are bursting at the seams and energy bills are devastating families!!!"

Sarah Ann - Australia

I am a single mother with a one year old not receiving child support. My medications cost me \$84 per month, already going without my asthma preventer and not including Panadol or teething gel my son will need that month. I have stopped taking my reflux medication due to cost and regularly go without my anti seizure or blood pressure medications so I can afford rent and basic foods.

Tammy - South Australia

Get involved

Join us in the fight for more affordable medicines by taking the following four actions outlined below.

These actions will help raise awareness and advocate for meaningful change that benefits your patients and community.

1

Engage with local
MPs and
candidates

2

Share your story
& ask patients
to share theirs

3

Lend your voice
in media
stories

4

Spread the *Affordable
Medicines Now* message
in your pharmacy &
on social media

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Record a video story

Do you have a moving story about an experience you've witnessed? Do you know a patient who is struggling to afford their medicines and willing to share their views?

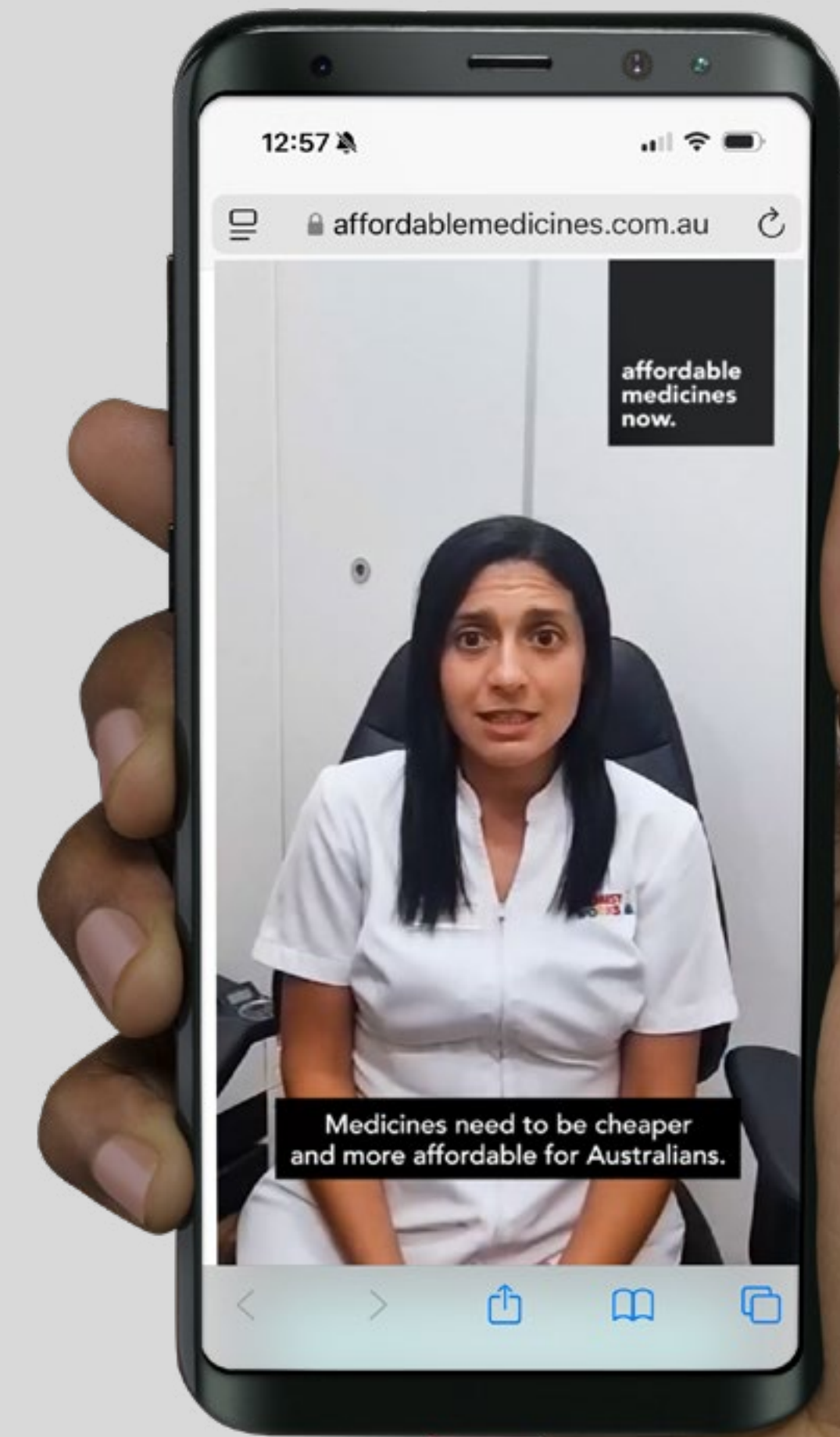
Help us raise awareness about the real struggles people face when they can't afford their medicines. Video provides a compelling storytelling medium, which can be easily shared to win over hearts and minds.

Record and share with us your own—or patients'—video stories.

Helpful hints for recording and sharing video stories:

- To use a mobile phone, make sure to first switch it to airplane mode.
- It's great if you have a lapel mic, but if not, find a quiet and well-lit space to record. Use a tripod if you have one, otherwise rest your phone on a prop, or hold it with a steady hand.
- Conduct a short test video to ensure the picture and sound quality are OK.
- To submit your video, send it to 0429 827 830 using WhatsApp or Signal.

Mobile phone footage is more than sufficient for quality. It's important to honestly represent patients' stories!



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Lend your voice in the media

Local voices and local media stories are vital to raise awareness about the challenges facing patients and encourage the government to take action.

If you are a confident speaker and are willing to be a media spokesperson for *Affordable Medicines Now*, we can guide and support you.

Get in touch at media@guild.org.au.



Hearing from community pharmacists

@ANNE.STANLEY.WERRIWA



LUKE VAN DER RIJT PHARMACIST WINNEWS

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Belong Needs Affordable Medicines Now
A community under pressure

<p>Healthcare Crisis</p> <p>1 in 4</p> <p>residents live with long-term health conditions requiring regular medication.</p>	<p>Families Under Financial Stress</p> <p>35% of renters struggling with housing costs</p> <p>24% of homeowners in mortgage stress</p> <p>Many families are forced to choose between housing and healthcare.</p>
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We asked people in Belong whether they'd choose to pay rent or pay for medicine. Here's what they said:

"It's the rent. That way, if I die from not having my necessary medication but not from starvation, at least I'll be in a pain, comfortable bed or a hospice."

"Pay the rent. You have to have somewhere to live."

Growing Community Support
In less than two weeks, our message has reached 33k+ Aussies across 70,000+ times in Belong. Engagement rate is high at 4%.

END THE TOUGH CHOICES

It's time for change.
Prescribing medicine shouldn't force a choice between basic needs and essential medicines.

Learn more at affordablemedicines.com.au



Amplify the message in your pharmacy

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The Guild has prepared a range of digital resources to use on social media, newsletters and in your communications. The messages and resources have been developed based on our informed understanding of issues impacting Australian patients. Our research and testing of the imagery and messages have shown what resonates most strongly, and what will help to communicate our requests most effectively.

Digital resources include:

- Static and dynamic social media tiles
- Newsletter text and banners
- Printable posters
- Digital display screens.

Hard copy resources include:

Members in key target electorates will receive a package of hard copy resources to display in the pharmacy. This helps provide impactful awareness-raising in the geographic areas where it matters most.

Examples include:

- Posters
- Flyers
- Tent cards for display on counters
- A frames.



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Communication resources

We've put together a range of digital resources to help you raise awareness about the struggles many Australians face and what can the government do about it.

Social media



eBanners



Flyers and posters



Text for your eNewsletters



Letters to the editor



Are you one of them?

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Many in our community are struggling to **afford** their medicines.

SHARE YOUR STORY
AFFORDABLEMEDICINES.COM.AU

Together, we can make medicines affordable.

Social media

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A range of social media tiles are available for you to use. Below, you'll find some example captions to choose from – or feel free to share your own story.

Download all social media tiles →

Image



Caption

Example 1

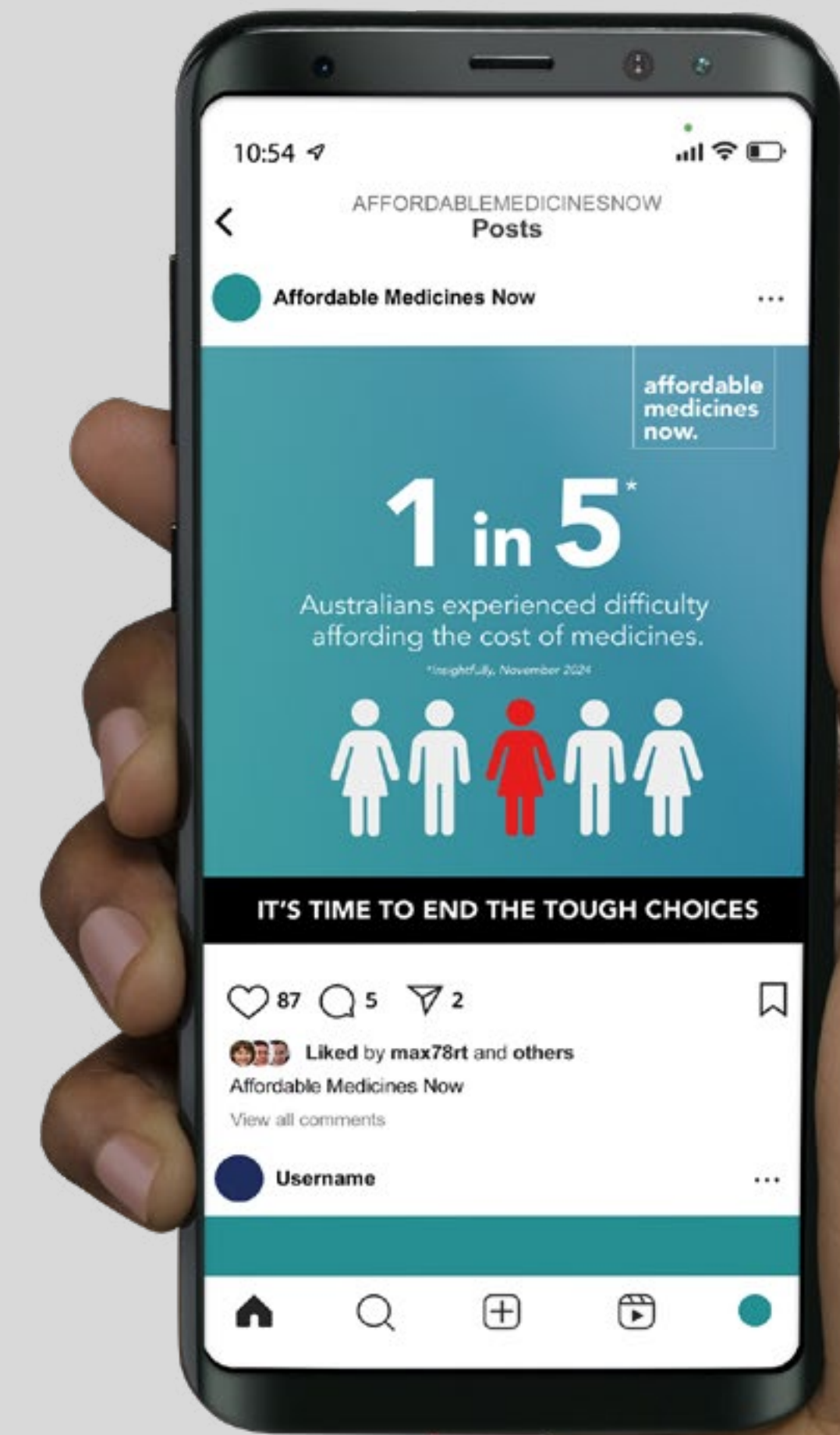
If you don't have your health, what do you have?

My patients should not have to choose between essential medicines and other necessities. It's heartbreaking to see them struggle, knowing that their health is at risk because they are choosing groceries, rent and bills over their medicines.

This year, I'm urging the federal government to lower the PBS co-payment to make essential medicines more affordable for all Australians.

Support the cause to **#EndToughChoicesNow** by sharing your story at affordablemedicines.com.au. **#AffordableMedicinesNow**

Use our hashtags **#EndToughChoicesNow** and **#AffordableMedicinesNow**



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Image



Caption

Example 2

As a community pharmacist, I see firsthand the tough choices my patients have to make when it comes to affording their medicines. With rising rent and soaring grocery costs, 1 in 5 Australians are struggling to access the medicines they need.

It's time we make a change. Share your story at affordablemedicines.com.au and help raise awareness in support of **#EndToughChoicesNow** and **#AffordableMedicinesNow**.

Image



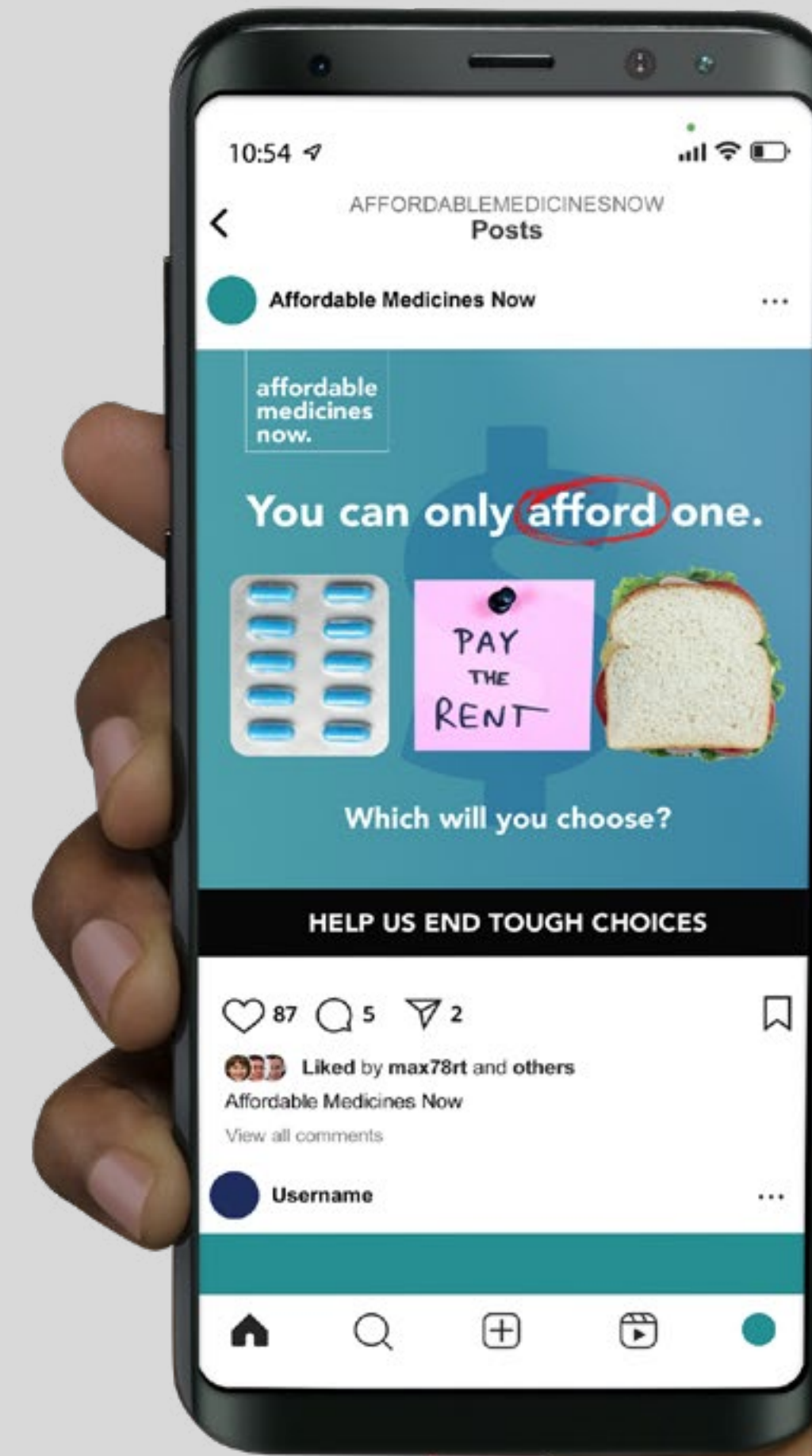
Caption

Example 3

I see many patients who face difficult choices every day—whether it's putting food on the table, paying for housing, or being able to afford the medicines they need to stay healthy. Unfortunately, this is the reality for too many people.

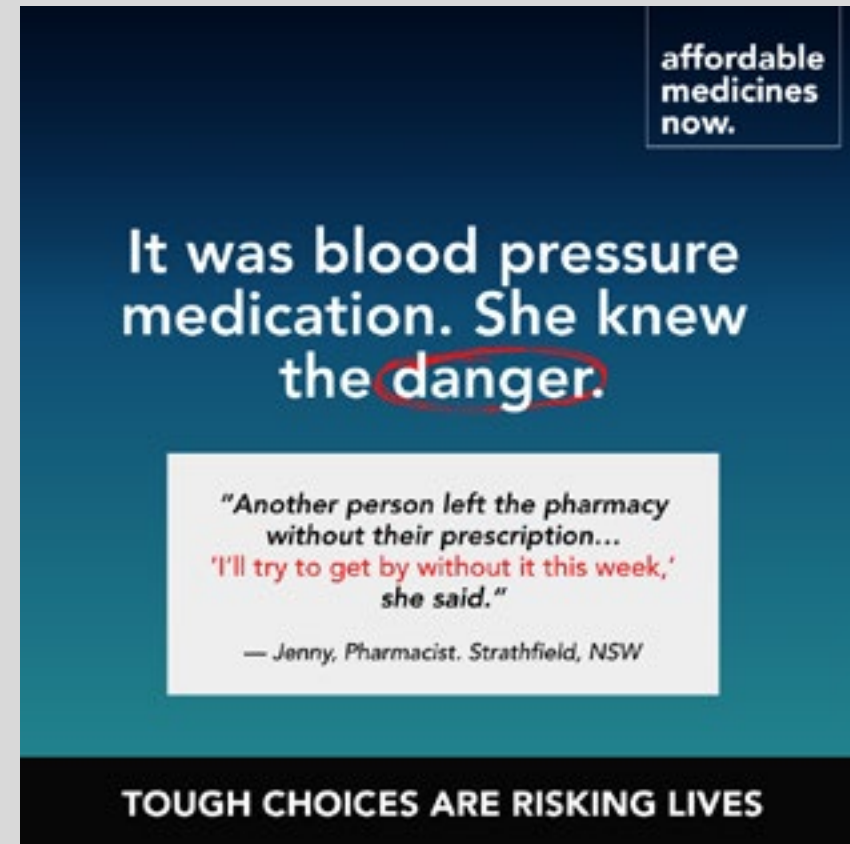
But we can change this. The government has the power to **#EndToughChoicesNow** and make medicines more affordable, providing much-needed relief for struggling families.

Help us raise awareness and advocate for cheaper medicines by sharing your story at affordablemedicines.com.au. **#AffordableMedicinesNow**



Image

Caption



Example 4

As a pharmacist, I see firsthand the tough choices my patients have to make when it comes to affording their medicines. With rising rent and soaring grocery costs, 1 in 5 Australians are struggling to access the medicines they need.

It's time we make a change. Share your story at affordablemedicines.com.au and help raise awareness in support of **#EndToughChoicesNow** and **#AffordableMedicinesNow**.

Find these social tiles, and many more, on the *Affordable Medicines Now* member hub.



Download all social media tiles →

eBanners

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You can use these banners in your email signatures or newsletters to help raise awareness about *Affordable Medicines Now*. Encourage others to join the movement for more affordable medicines by linking to affordablemedicines.com.au.

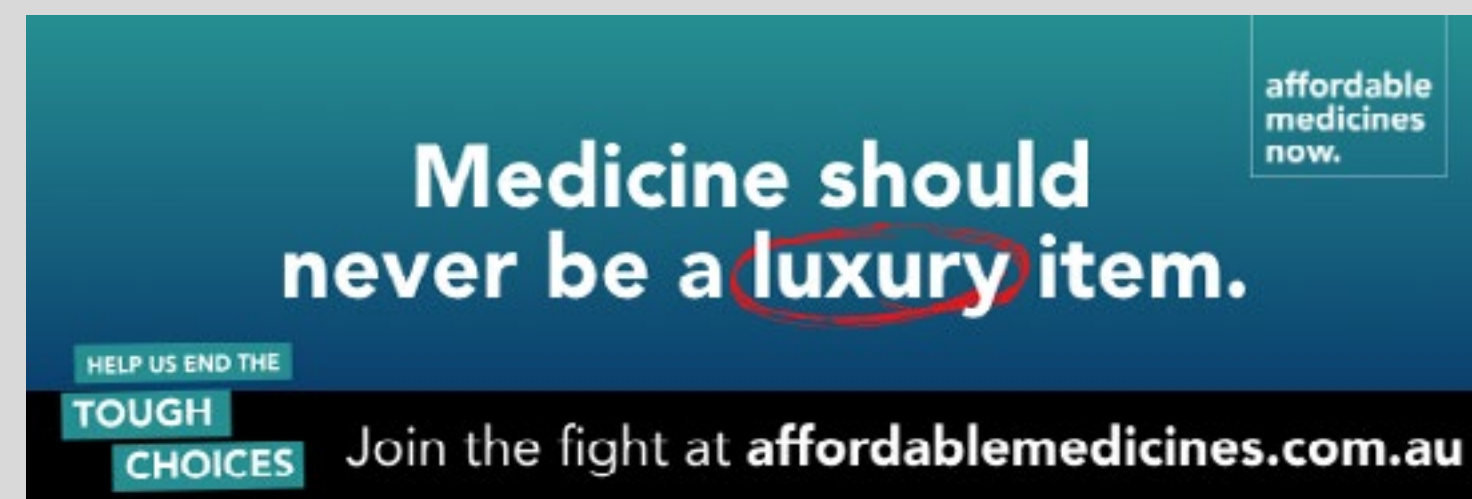
Download banners



Banner 1



Banner 2



Banner 3



Flyers and posters

Print and display these flyers and posters in your pharmacy to spread the word about *Affordable Medicines Now*. Display them in high-traffic areas to inform your patients and community about the need for more affordable medicines and how they can get involved.

Display these digital posters on your pharmacy's screens to highlight the importance of *Affordable Medicines Now*.

[Download printable flyers and posters →](#)

[Download digital posters →](#)

Poster 1



Poster 2



Flyer



Text for your eNewsletters

The rising cost of living is making it harder for many Australians to afford essentials like food, housing, and medicines. In the last three years, 21% of Australians—3.75 million people—have had to skip prescriptions due to cost, leading to worse health outcomes and added strain on our healthcare system.

As pharmacists, we see firsthand the impact this has on our patients. Medicines should never be a luxury, yet for many, it is becoming one. This federal election, we are urging the government to make medicines more affordable for all, helping the 12 million Australians who rely on multiple prescriptions each year.

No one should have to choose between food and medicine. Join us in advocating for a healthcare system where essential medicines are within reach for every Australian.

Visit affordablemedicines.com.au to learn more and get involved.

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Letters to the editor

Writing a letter to the editor is a powerful way to raise awareness about the need for affordable medicines in your community. You can write a letter proactively or responding to articles in the newspaper, for example on cost of living or healthcare.

Below are three examples you can use or adapt to highlight the need for action to be taken to reduce the PBS general co-payment.

Letter 1

It's heartbreaking to see the challenges being faced by people in [insert town], having to choose between medications, delaying filling prescriptions, or skipping them altogether. The rising cost of living is taking a toll, and I'd like to see the government reduce the general copayment for prescriptions to make medicine more affordable for everyone in this election.

Letter 2

The increasing cost of living is hurting people in [insert town]. As a pharmacist, I worry about the difficult choices some patients have to make. I'm especially concerned about those I haven't seen for a while as these are often the patients who have stopped taking their medicines altogether. We need to do more to help people afford their medications. I want to see my local candidate [insert name] stand up and take action to reduce the general co-payment.

Letter 3

Every day, people in [insert town], are forced to make difficult choices—choosing between medicine and food. This simply shouldn't happen in a country as fortunate as ours. Our MP [insert name] can and should take action to make medicine more affordable. Reducing the general co-payment is an immediate step the government can take to make things easier for those doing it tough, improve health and reduce long term complications.

Affordable Medicines Now Q&A

Below are some common questions you may be asked by patients, or that you might have yourself, along with suggested answers to help guide the conversation.

Why do we need *Affordable Medicines Now* after we already had a \$10 reduction?

Despite the recent reduction in the PBS co-payment, many Australians still struggle to afford their medicines. The government needs to go further to make medicine more affordable. We know that the cost of living is causing many Australians to suffer, and we are seeing an increasing number of people reporting that they have been unable to afford their prescription medicines.

The PBS rate is frozen for the next year, and the next five for those on concession cards. Isn't that enough?

Freezing the PBS co-payment rate is a step in the right direction, but it's not enough. Many Australians face rising costs for essentials like housing, food and utilities, and even a frozen rate remains a barrier for those struggling to afford medications. For people managing chronic conditions, the need for affordable medicines extends well beyond a one or five-year freeze. Reducing the co-payment further is essential to ensure ongoing access to care and better health outcomes.

Isn't the safety net enough to make medications affordable?

While the safety net helps some Australians, many never reach it because they can't afford the initial costs. Recent data shows 21.9% of Australians aged 45+ skip medications due to cost, even with the safety net in place. We need solutions that help people now.

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60-day dispensing was brought in to further save patients money. Isn't that enough?

Our position has always been about sustainable access to medicines. We support making medicines more affordable through PBS reductions because this ensures both affordability for patients and sustainable local pharmacy services. This approach helps maintain the essential healthcare services your local pharmacy provides while reducing cost barriers for patients.

Reducing out of pocket costs and maintaining viable local pharmacies aren't contradictory goals - they're both essential for healthcare access. We need solutions that make medicines affordable while preserving the local pharmacy services communities rely on.

Making medicines affordable while maintaining access to local pharmacy services is crucial. In the past 3 years, 3.75 million Australians have been unable to afford prescription medicines. Reducing PBS costs provides immediate relief while ensuring pharmacies can continue providing essential healthcare services in your community.

How much would these changes cost?

Making medicines affordable is an investment in preventing more expensive health problems later. When people can't afford their prescriptions, they often end up needing costly hospital care. This is about smart healthcare spending that helps all Australians stay healthy.

The government has just announced \$8.5bn for medicare. Won't that help patients?

Better access to GPs with significant investment up to 2030 is welcome. Yet patients need help now. 1 in 5 people is has skipped a prescription because of the cost in the past three years. This figure rises to 1 in 3 in regional areas.

The government needs to act now, not later, to reduce the cost of medicine and put money into the hip pockets of patients while they are feeling the pressure of the cost of living.

Contact us: communications@guild.org.au

