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MEDIA STATEMENT

Consumer medicines sector welcomes wider consultation on review of codeine based pain relievers

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing the non-prescription consumer healthcare products sector, today welcomed a decision by the Commonwealth to consult more widely ahead of any measure that could make it harder for consumers to purchase over-the-counter (OTC) medicines containing codeine.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Ms Juliet Seifert, said she was pleased that no rescheduling decision affecting codeine based analgesics had been taken at the latest meeting of the Commonwealth's National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee (NDPSC).

Ms Seifert said that ASMI also welcomed the establishment of a working party, to include industry, which would look at the availability of OTC products containing codeine.

The NDPSC had foreshadowed in February 2008 that it would consider rescheduling pain relievers containing ibuprofen and codeine to Schedule 8, a category reserved for drugs at high risk of being abused.

At its latest meeting, no decisions were taken regarding pack sizes however the Committee has foreshadowed that it will consider the matter in October.

“Industry and other stakeholders will now have the opportunity to review evidence which was before the committee to gain an understanding of their concerns and to address the issues raised,” Ms Seifert said.

“These medicines play an important role in relieving strong pain and any move to restrict their availability would be an enormous inconvenience to thousands of responsible users,” she said.

ASMI expects that full account will be taken of the working party's recommendations before any action is taken. ASMI stands ready to discuss practical ways to address the issue of misuse if there is hard evidence to justify this.

About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. www.asmi.com.au

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