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MEDIA RELEASE

Media Statement from the new President of ASMI

The newly elected President of the Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), Lindsay Forrest, Regional Director, Reckitt Benckiser Australia & New Zealand, today issued the following statement:

“I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the ASMI Committee of Management, and to the members of ASMI who have supported me in taking this role.

“The opportunity of representing the non-prescription medicines industry in this capacity is a real honour and I look forward to helping to advance the debate around healthcare and healthcare products amongst all our key stakeholders, and the wider community.

“The non-prescription medicines sector represents a \$3 billion industry in Australia, and it reaches into the homes of millions of Australians. We have a significant role and an ongoing obligation to ensure that all Australians have the tools and understanding to be able to effectively and safely look after their health and that of their families.

“This means not only providing them with access to medicines that are safe, efficacious, of high quality, and available as widely as possible, but also helping to advance levels of health literacy so that all Australians, no matter where they live or their economic circumstances, can avail themselves of the best health care options.

“We will continue to mount a case for appropriate self care, so that there is increasing awareness of the opportunity for individuals to take greater personal responsibility for their health, and a new understanding of the innovative solutions to make the best use of healthcare resources. One such opportunity is to expand the role of pharmacists in the treatment of many minor ailments as a way of alleviating the burden on overstretched GPs.

“ASMI will continue to lobby vigorously on behalf of members to ensure that the industry receives fair treatment in the regulatory environment. Globally, in recent times, we have seen a creeping risk-aversion on the part of regulators, which has seen some products with a long, safe history of use having their access restricted.

“There needs to be some fresh thinking about the implications of regulatory decisions which cause inconvenience to thousands of responsible consumers because of a tiny minority who grossly misuse medicines.

“We will continue to build positive and mutually beneficial relationships with our key stakeholders, particularly consumers and community pharmacy. Consumer health and safety is paramount in everything that our industry stands for. We are committed to working with consumer health representatives to ensure that we, as an industry, hear what is important, and so that all consumers can share in the things we have to offer.

“The community pharmacy sector represents the vital link between industry and the public, and we will build on the excellent relationship we currently have with professional pharmacy bodies, including in areas that will enable pharmacy to grow as a key point of contact in primary health care.

“We want to build lasting and positive relationships with GPs, who represent a critical element in the nation’s professional healthcare workforce. Some parts of the GP network have voiced their concern at ASMI’s recent work which identified the opportunity for some minor ailments to be treated at a local pharmacy as a means of reducing the burden on GPs.

“We strongly believe there is evidence to demonstrate that this can benefit Australia, and we want to work cooperatively with the professional associations to explore what, I am sure, can be a better outcome for all parties.

“I look forward to working closely with the Executive Director of ASMI, Dr Deon Schoombie, the very professional and dedicated team at the ASMI Secretariat, and my fellow members on the Committee of Management.

“I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to my predecessor, Ralf Dahmen. Ralf has been an outstanding president of ASMI, and one whose energy, passion and drive have helped to raise the standing and authority of the association,” Mr Forrest said.

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.

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