

23 July 2008

MEDIA STATEMENT

Proposal for a revised Pharmacy Only category for medicines

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products, today welcomed a recommendation that could see consumers gain improved access to medicines with the ability to take greater responsibility for their health.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Ms Juliet Seifert said that the organization supports a call from the National President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Mr Kos Sclavos for a revised category of Pharmacy Only medicines.

Under the proposal, the current Pharmacist Only Medicines or Schedule 3 (S3) would be modified to create a notification system.

This would allow pharmacists to deal with minor ailments involving advice and monitoring. It would also see pharmacists play a role in chronic and recurrent disease following initial diagnosis by a GP, as well as addressing the issue of people needing to visit their GP for repeat prescriptions.

The proposal would involve the mandatory collection of critical healthcare information to enable pharmacists to be able to provide the most appropriate remedies and to ensure medicines are not misused.

“The proposal opens the way for a number of medicines that are central to the management of the most prevalent conditions to be more accessible to individuals and families without the need for a prescription,” Ms Seifert said.

“At a time when medical resources are stretched and with the added burden of chronic disease, measures to cut costs and improve access to safe and effective medicines should be applauded.

“There is no good reason to restrict access to products that can be safely and effectively delivered by a professional pharmacist, as currently occurs with a wide range of products.

“The professional intervention of a pharmacist means that people seeking symptomatic relief for minor ailments can avoid the time and expense of visiting a GP. For many chronic conditions, after an initial diagnosis and referral from a GP, a pharmacist is in a position to provide appropriate repeat medication and monitoring of conditions. It also means cost savings to the health budget,” Ms Seifert 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. www.asmi.com.au

Media contact: Bob Bowden, Foresight Communications (02) 9241 2811, 0412 753 298