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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Preventative Health Agency should be a priority for new Parliament**

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products has welcomed the Federal Government's decision to proceed with legislation to establish the new national Preventative Health Agency.

ASMI Executive Director, Dr Deon Schoombie said the planned Preventative Health Agency was one of the key recommendations of the Preventative Health Taskforce, and represents an important step in delivering improved health outcomes for all Australians.

"We saw a considerable amount of work by the Preventative Health Taskforce examining the benefits of a stronger focus on strategies to improve health and fitness across the community. We fully endorse the Taskforce's position that there will need to be stronger partnerships between government, non-government organisations, industry, the business sector and communities, as well as action by individuals and families to improve the health of all Australians.

"Preventative health needs to become a central focus of our efforts to improve health for all generations, and the planned national agency will spearhead those strategies.

"It is encouraging that the Government is planning to reintroduce the legislation and we would encourage all parties to lend their support to this important policy initiative," Dr Schoombie said.

Dr Schoombie said there was an opportunity for preventative health strategies to play an important role in addressing some of the community's most prevalent and treatable conditions. In addition to priority areas such as smoking, alcohol, and obesity, there are real opportunities to address common conditions such as osteoporosis, back pain, heart disease, diabetes, and mental health problems.

More evidence is emerging that simple and cheaper prevention strategies can be at least as cost-efficient as more expensive interventions. These initiatives can make a significant improvement to the quality and productive life of individuals, as well as alleviating government health budgets and reducing the burden on over-stretched GPs.

Pharmacists have a key role to play in any roll-out of community-wide preventative health campaigns. They are already highly accessible, and trusted by consumers. With proper community awareness programs, consumers will feel more confident in seeking the advice of pharmacists, and pharmacists can become more involved in patient self care.

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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](http://www.asmi.com.au)

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