



Australian Self-Medication Industry Inc
Suite 2203, Level 22, 141 Walker Street,
North Sydney NSW 2060
PO Box 764, North Sydney NSW 2059
Ph +61 2 9922 5111 Fax +61 2 9959 3693
Email: info@asmi.com.au www.asmi.com.au
ABN 55 082 798 952

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MEDIA STATEMENT

Health reform roadmap could benefit from minor ailments initiative

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products today urged the Federal Government to implement a minor ailments program to help reduce the burden on overstretched GPs and reduce costs to the health system.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Juliet Seifert was commenting on the *Roadmap to Reform* health update issued by the Minister for Health and Ageing.

“We strongly urge the government to supplement its reform agenda with a program to help educate consumers and health professionals on a better way to manage minor ailments.

“The whole community could benefit from a program that promotes improved health literacy and self-reliance, with information and tools on where to seek appropriate health advice and treatments.

“It is estimated that GPs in Australia face 25 million consultations annually for minor ailments, and directing many of these to community pharmacists will enable GPs to focus more on serious conditions.”

Work undertaken by ASMI shows that the GP resources devoted to coughs, colds and other minor ailments could free-up the equivalent of 1,000 full time GPs to treat more serious health problems.

“A program of self care in pharmacies could make serious inroads into the current shortage of GPs across the country and could produce results in a relatively short period of time,” Ms Seifert said.

“There is also some \$260 million in ‘waste and resource misallocation’ as a result of Medicare benefits associated with GP treatment of minor ailments.

“It would be encouraging to see the Government looking to a community education program that would help better utilise our scarce health resources and provide consumers in real need with an appropriate level of care,” 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