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MEDIA STATEMENT

ASMI welcomes focus on individual health as part of national primary health care strategy

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products today welcomed the Federal Government's discussion paper on a National Primary Health Care Strategy, notably the enhanced focus on reforms to the health care workforce and measures to enable patients to better self manage their conditions.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Juliet Seifert, said the discussion paper is a positive step in recognising the fundamental issue that health budgets cannot sustain current levels of activity unless there is far reaching reform to the way we treat and manage primary health.

"There are many minor ailments and chronic conditions that can be self managed or treated by individuals in consultation with allied health professionals.

"The paper recognises the potential for individuals to have a greater role in decision making about their health, through greater self-care, monitoring and prevention".

Recent research in the UK found that some 57 million GP consultations per year involved minor ailments and accounted for 20 per cent of total GP consultations at an annual cost to the health system of almost \$5 billion.

With GPs in Australia under extreme pressure, there is a real need to examine the effectiveness of the broader health workforce as well as alternatives to costly GP consultations for conditions that can be more effectively managed when diagnosed

Health literacy is an important element in any reform because, as the discussion paper acknowledges, there needs to be greater availability of health information to enable people to manage their own self care.

Ms Seifert said the discussion paper represents a bold step toward bringing overdue reforms to national health.

"These are big issues which need addressing because we have reached the point where the current framework is not sustainable and health outcomes are being compromised.

"The Government should be commended for taking this step toward such a fundamental and necessary reform".

Ms Seifert said the regulatory environment can also play a part in enhanced preventative health and self care. There is a considerable role for switching medicines from prescription-only to over-the-counter (OTC) status as part of a national health system where people are empowered to take greater responsibility for personal health.



BETTER HEALTH THROUGH RESPONSIBLE SELF CARE



“Switches take pressure off GPs and save consumers time and money. Many chronic conditions and minor ailments can be effectively managed by people having access to appropriate medication over the counter and with help and guidance from their pharmacist.

“The UK market has been at the forefront in switching a number of prescription only medicines with a long record of safe and effective use to OTC status,” Ms Seifert said.

The topic of Self Care and the Australian healthcare system will be the centrepiece of the ASMI national conference in Sydney Wednesday November 19 at Australian Technology Park, Redfern.

The conference will hear speakers from the Federal Government, the healthcare industry, pharmaceutical companies and pharmacists on the future of Self Care and its impact on individuals and health budgets.

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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