

APP Conference 2026

NPSA CEO Elizabeth Cuming's address to the APP State of the Industry Panel Session, March 2026

If I look at where we are as an industry – we are in good shape but there is always more work to do.

Reflecting on the 3 critical instruments that are so fundamental to us all: these pillars or struts that uphold the PBS. They are of course the CSO, 8CPA and 1PWA. They are the mechanisms that with government support provide the essential security and sustainability of timely access to **available** medicine for all Australians no matter where they live.

This is by no means a small feat – Australia is vast and the population widely spread.

Our world class infrastructure makes distribution **look** easy but, try to imagine the logistics of safely moving **more than 2 million** PBS medicines and healthcare products – not every **week** - but every **day**. That's what we do.

The journey , for example, of a PBS medicine to outback Kununurra is roughly 3,000 km from Perth. To put that in perspective – that is the same distance as Paris to Moscow.

This happens under our care - temperature controlled if necessary- within 24 hours of ordering.

Like in any pharmacy dispensary, there is, expertise, investment and commitment driving this complex daily process.

And the CSO holds us, the wholesalers to account on behalf of patients – each day of the year.

So, let's build on what we know works for patients and look to the future.

Enhancing Primary Care is vital – community pharmacy is at the frontline of delivering that care, and in some rural and remote locations the pharmacy is the only health service remaining.

We need to ensure that pharmacy scope of practice is able to respond to this growing disparity and bridge the gap – and, as CSO wholesalers, we support this objective.

But the challenges in care are not just geographical. We have a growing list of medicines in shortage.

These supply challenges are being compounded by geopolitical instability.

As wholesalers we can't impact dynamics offshore, but we can impact the onshore response – if we have enough warning. When we know in advance and work with all stakeholders, we can make a difference and improve medicine availability and the equality of access to onshore inventory – but it requires all of us to work together.

As we do when natural disasters strike, the wholesalers move into action to minimise disruptions to onshore supply – we have dedicated teams working around the clock - managing resources and liaising with all stakeholders including you - our customers.



Finally, we need to step up the dialogue on a growing issue – the alarming fall in vaccination rates across all population groups in Australia.

We are experiencing the most significant surge in whooping cough with more than 80,000 cases reported in the year 24/25, - the highest number since surveillance began.

And Measles - once eliminated in Australia - is now experiencing a resurgence. We all have a role to play in arresting this. Pharmacy must be the first stop for all vaccinations. This requires a remodeling of the current system with a patient-centric **focus** that enables consumers to have choice and access at a location and time that suits them – supported by a supply chain solution **designed** for pharmacy – so like the PBS, vaccines can be **ordered daily** through your existing wholesaler portals.

In the PBS we have an agile, reliable and safe system - we need to streamline vaccine access **using** the PBS supply chain model as the gold standard.

In closing - to all in this room, thank you for all that you do. You can be assured that the wholesalers are laser focused on working with industry stakeholders to improve medicine availability and staying in lockstep with the Guild and Government to find solutions that bring all PBS medicines back through the wholesaler supply chain and the CSO.

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