npsa Australia's medicine distribution network

THE NETWORK DEDICATED TO MEDICINES SUPPLY

Thanks to the wholesale medicine distribution network operating unseen at the heart of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), Australians have come to trust being able to have their prescriptions filled quickly and reliably, whether they live in the cities, rural areas or remote Indigenous communities.

NPSA members provide this vital link between the manufacturers of medicines and 5,900+ community pharmacies, plus hospitals and other primary care facilities, including aged care. It is through the support of our network that the Government can guarantee all Australians timely, reliable, and safe access to PBS medicines across the nation, generally within 24 hours.

The NPSA is the peak industry body representing Community Service Obligation (CSO) medicine wholesalers, operating this complex, dynamic and highly specialised healthcare system. Every day, our 25 state-of-the-art distribution centres seamlessly manage and distribute more than 10,400 PBS items, many requiring additional security or end-to-end cold-chain transportation, all over the country.

Our highly trained national workforce oversees the careful management and supply of more than 330 million units of prescription medicines each year that are needed by Australian consumers to treat anything from diabetes, arthritis and asthma to cancer, heart disease and addiction.

With eyes across the entire medicine supply chain, NPSA members monitor and track supply data in real-time, enabling the network to identify and respond quickly to emerging issues such as on-shore shortages or high-volume orders, product recalls or major unforeseen events. We also distribute products to support the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) and National Immunisation Program (NIP), ensuring patients have access to these important programs.

SAFEGUARDING SUPPLY IN EMERGENCIES

Our systems are strong and dependable. NPSA members have demonstrated the capability to adapt and meet the challenges of climate change and extreme weather events, maintaining medicine access to affected communities through bushfires and floods, power outages, storms and roadblocks.

Our bushfire readiness plans can be rapidly deployed to support communities and emergency services. This capability has become a core competency of our members' operations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NPSA members stepped into an industry leadership position assisting government and supply chain stakeholders to actively manage the impact of global medicine shortages, ensuring fair distribution in the face of unprecedented surges in demand.

THE CSO GUARANTEE: PROTECTING RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Our partnership with Government is underpinned by a Community Service Obligation (CSO). Through extensive guidelines and standards, we commit to deliver any PBS-listed medicine anywhere in Australia generally within 24 hours. Monthly compliance reporting on these standards to the Department of Health and Aged Care provide a robust regulatory framework of accountability and reliability for government and the community. Importantly, this means patients living outside metro areas have fair and equal access to PBS medicines.

PARTNERING WITH GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS FUTURE HEALTH PRIORITIES

The Australian healthcare system is facing significant challenges and must adapt to meet future health priorities. Partnering with Government, we will ensure that our network continues to evolve to respond to an ageing population, and to mitigate the impacts of climate change and other macroeconomic pressures on the global supply chain.

NPSA Members have invested more than $750M in infrastructure and innovation in the past five years and we are committed to utilising and further leveraging our capability, capacity and unique visibility of the supply chain to support government regulatory programs and initiatives for primary healthcare.

Additional and sustainable Commonwealth funding, through mechanisms such as the CSO and the Pharmaceutical Wholesaler Agreement (PWA) is important as we work together to strengthen and futureproof the links that save lives.

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