

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



Thursday, 3 August 2023

NEW PHARMACIST PILOT GETS GREEN LIGHT

Victorians will soon have access to quicker and more convenient treatment options, with critical legislation to expand the role of community pharmacists passing Parliament today – paving the way for pharmacists to become authorised prescribers as part of a statewide pilot.

Delivering on the promise the Andrews Labor Government made to Victorians at the election, the pilot will give Victorians more options to access treatment and advice for common conditions and basic healthcare needs from October.

Amendments to the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* have now passed both Houses, meaning that pharmacists will soon be able to treat minor skin conditions, reissue oral contraceptives, and supply medication for uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs).

The pilot will also allow participating pharmacists to provide a range of travel and other public health vaccines.

Pharmacist prescribing is already a well-established practice internationally, and evidence shows that it can be a safe and effective way to give people the basic healthcare they need when they need it.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invested \$20 million to establish this pilot which will increase access to affordable and timely primary healthcare options from a trusted source.

Not only will this provide more ready access to routine care, it will also free up GPs to provide care to patients with more complex needs and reduce non-urgent presentations to our busy hospital emergency departments.

All stages of the pilot are being guided by expert advisory and clinical groups, representing consumers and the pharmacy and medical professions.

Community pharmacists can participate in the pilot through an opt-in EOI process and will have to meet certain conditions before they can start providing services, including mandatory training and an assessment of the facilities available at the pharmacy.

The 12-month pilot will be evaluated with recommendations provided to government to help inform longer-term decision making around the prescribing role of community pharmacists.

This is one of many initiatives in place to improve access to care and provide an alternative to hospitals and GPs, including \$90 million to deliver 27 Priority Primary Care Centres which have treated more than 100,000 patients to date.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"This pilot will test an expanded role for community pharmacists and will help Victorians struggling to get an appointment with a GP."

"Timely care is so important, even for basic health conditions, and this trial will explore the effectiveness of expanding the range of care pharmacists can offer to help Victorians access the care they need, when they need it."