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Major parties commit to addressing medicine safety

The Coalition, Labor Party and the Greens have all responded to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) five election action items, ahead of the federal election – highlighting their support for the valuable role pharmacists play in our healthcare system.

Both the Coalition and the Greens have committed to declaring medicine safety a National Health Priority Area. Labor advised that the key role pharmacists play in the supply of medicines is reflected in their National Platform. Their Australian Health Reform Commission would no doubt highlight the issue of medicine safety and the need for investment in quality use of medicines.

PSA National President Dr Chris Freeman said this acknowledgement by the major parties is vital step forward in addressing the alarming issue of medicine-related harm.

"Medicine-related problems cause 250,000 hospital admissions and 400,000 emergency department presentations in Australia each year, costing the healthcare system \$1.4 billion annually. At least half of this harm is avoidable, and pharmacists are the key to improving the safe and quality use of medicines," Dr Freeman said.

Addressing medicine safety is the first of five commitments PSA has sought from an incoming Government:

1. Address the alarming rate of medicine-related harm in our health system by declaring medicine safety a National Health Priority Area (NHPA)
2. Provide funding to embed pharmacists within healthcare teams, particularly in residential aged care facilities
3. Accept the MBS Review Taskforce's recommendations to allow pharmacists to access allied health items to provide medication management services to patients with complex care requirements
4. Align the incentives for pharmacists to support rural and remote communities with those of other rural and remote health practitioners
5. Include PSA as a signatory to the Community Pharmacy Agreement.

"To meet community health needs, we must ensure pharmacists can practise to their full potential, develop within a team of health professionals and have a quality agenda for the services and care they deliver," Dr Freeman said.

"PSA looks forward to working closely with an incoming Government to empower pharmacists to do more to deliver better healthcare for all Australians."

Media contact: Carly Lusk, *Public Affairs Officer* – 0487 922 176