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Media Release



BETTER ACCESS
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BAA ASKS FOR EXTENSION ON RUSHED PERIOD OF STAKEHOLDER COMMENT ON NATIONAL MEDICINES POLICY DRAFT

Better Access Australia encourages patient groups and individuals to ask for an extension on current NMP consultation process.

Better Access Australia has labelled the two-week consultation process on the draft National Medicines Policy document released today as farcical, and contemptuous of the effort over 150 stakeholders have already invested in the process.

“An initial review of the document shows us that there is very little of the community’s input reflected in this document, if patients and consumers want change they are going to have to demand it”, Better Access Director Mr David Mackay said.

“A document that appears to focus on making sure our public health policy is all about cost and not about improving the affordability of time and access for patients is one that still needs a major re-write. Reflecting on the submissions already made, and the work of the parliamentary inquiry, this document is going to need significant push back from the community if it is to reflect their health and not the system’s process and fiscal preferences.

“In October last year, those in the know were granted an extension to make their initial submissions. At a time when these same patient groups have had to contribute to the Pre-Budget process, PBAC consumer comment process, had an MSAC cost recovery review sprung on them and now this... we don’t all have the benefit of some 5,000 staff to do this work like the Department of Health does.

“Most patient groups are asking the same one or two people to find the time on top of everything else they do, often voluntarily, to participate and comment on this seminal document for therapeutics access in Australia.

“Yet, again unless you are in-the-know individuals and consumer groups who made submissions have yet to be directly notified that the consultation paper is open for comment for the minimal timeframe provided. Unless they’re subscribed to a PBS RSS feed their reflections are not being directly sought.

“The Minister granted the review team and extension, he needs to grant the community one too.”

Better Access Australia has requested the minister for health and the shadow minister for health support an extension to the two-week consultation period as a show of bipartisan support for the Australian community and this important public health policy.

This review had bipartisan support in the 2019 election period following election commitment requests by Medicines Australia for the review to be undertaken. We hope that continued joint commitment to medicines access in Australia can be put towards ending this unnecessary rush on a

policy, inconsistent with the way the health system engages on any other public health consultation process.

We will also be drawing attention to the community that the period for reflection and comment is now open so that all who want to have their voice heard are made aware.

For more information about Better Access Australia, please visit www.betteraccessaustralia.org.au

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