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## Better Access Australia welcomes bipartisan first steps in medicine affordability, but more is needed to make it a generational and equitable reform

*As part of their 2022 federal election commitments both major parties have recognised the increasing unaffordability of medicines access in Australia.*

*Both major parties are committing to reduce the co-payment for individuals and families earning over \$67K per year from 1 January 2023.*

“Better Access Australia welcomes the recognition by the major parties that we need to bring the day-to-day affordability of medicines back within reach of working Australians. Felicity McNeill chair, Better Access Australia said.

“Yesterday the Prime Minister committed to reducing the general co-payment for medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) by \$10 to \$32.50, and today Mr Albanese has announced the general co-payment will be reduced by \$12.50 to \$30.00 if Labor is elected to Government.

“These are incredibly important first steps in making day to day healthcare and medicines more affordable for the community.

“Most of the community use a lot of medicines, but most don’t reach the safety net reforms that were announced in the Budget last month. Equally, when so many individuals, couples and families are struggling with a weekly budget, waiting for the impact of safety nets, is simply not an option – they are going without their medicines, and that needs to stop.

“Reducing the general co-payment is an important first step, but with inflation at 5.1% both these commitments will be chewed up within two years like the 2019 safety net measure.

“It’s why we need a [second, third, fourth and fifth step](#) if we are to achieve the systematic reform that makes medicines affordable again over the next decade. Ms McNeill said

“In welcoming these announcements Better Access Australia maintains its call for:

- ✓ a permanent mid-tier co-payment of \$20 for individuals and families earning under the Family Tax Benefit A income thresholds,
- ✓ automated safety nets to make sure high medicine users get the full protection of the system like they do on the MBS,
- ✓ a freeze on indexation for five years on both co-pays and safety nets to stop inflation devaluing the commitments made over the past 24 hours, and
- ✓ ensuring the PBS co-pays and safety net apply to all PBS listed medicines and end the discrimination against specific diseases on the PBS.

“In combination with the policies announced by the Coalition and Labor, BAA is asking for reform that will ensure the principle of affordable access to medicines under the PBS can transcend economic volatility.



“Likewise, as we welcome these reforms for most people accessing the PBS, we remind all parties and independents that these reforms will continue to exclude over 53,000 patients who access opioid dependence medicines on the PBS, because the government has taken away their rights and protections to PBS co-pays and safety nets.

“They missed out on the safety net price relief in 2019 and they will miss out again unless these reforms also come with a commitment to immediately end the discrimination against this one area of disability and disease.

“Whilst other patients will benefit from the \$30-\$32.50 per month script fee from 1 January, patients accessing opioid dependence medicines and their families will still be charged \$50-\$200 a month for their medicine with no access to the safety net – something we simply would not tolerate in any other health condition or disease.

“These are the voices that cannot be heard but need equality of access to Medicare.

“We need an all-party and all-independent commitment to improving medicine affordability and call on all parties and candidates to not only support these price cut announcements, but also Better Access Australia’s call for a further four steps to deliver genuine affordability of medicines in Australia.

“We thank Labor and the Coalition for these commitments to medicine affordability and look forward to working with the parliament to ensure these reforms are generational, equitable and universal.”

For details on Better Access Australia’s full election 2022 health and disability services commitment requests. Please click [here](#).

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***Better health, disability and social services. Better Access Australia.***