

Notice to Community Pharmacies – North Queensland Floods February 2025

PBS Continued Dispensing Emergency Measure

In the wake of the ongoing flood disaster occurring in north Queensland, the Commonwealth Government has released a temporary *Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Continued Dispensing Emergency Measure* active from 4 February 2025 until 31 March 2025. This provides access to a wider range of PBS medicines in addition to other PBS medicines available under ongoing Continued Dispensing arrangements.

The instrument automatically applies in Queensland under Schedule 9, Part 1 of the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021 (MPMR).

For detail on the PBS requirements and a list of all the medicines available, refer to the attached notice below and www.pbs.gov.au/info/general/continued-dispensing.

Important information regarding continued dispensing

When utilising the PBS continued dispensing arrangements, pharmacists should:

1. First attempt to dispense using an e-prescription or an oral prescription from the patient's prescriber and ensure that the PBS eligibility requirements are met.
2. For monitored medicines, if you are unable to check QScript in relation to a patient, you should make a clinical judgement about appropriate treatment based on the information available to you, and document that you were unable to access QScript and the reason why.
3. Make a record of the supply (and keep the record or a copy of the record for 2 years):
 - a. the name of the pharmacist;
 - b. the date the medicine is sold;
 - c. the name and address of the patient;
 - d. for a monitored medicine—the date of birth of the patient;
 - e. the name of the medicine or other sufficient information to accurately identify the medicine;
 - f. the form, strength and amount of the medicine sold;
 - g. the instructions given for the use of the medicine;
 - h. the name of the prescriber who last prescribed the medicine to the person, if known;
 - i. for an oral hormonal contraceptive or diversion-risk medicine—a brief description of why the pharmacist is selling the contraceptive or medicine.
4. Comply with any other legislative and professional practice requirements e.g. <https://my.psa.org.au/s/article/Continued-dispensing-guidelines>

Note that the special PBS arrangements apply only to community pharmacies, and do not apply to public hospitals. Any attempt to deflect dispensing to public hospitals (e.g. because of stock shortage) needs to take this into consideration.

Pharmacists may also supply S2, S3 and S4 medicines without a prescription (outside of the special PBS arrangements) in accordance with sections 153-162 of the MPMR.

Pharmacies affected by the floods

Disposing of medicines

Pharmacies with small quantities of spoiled, damaged or expired medicine waste should place waste in a Return Unwanted Medicines (RUM) bin. For larger quantities of waste, the pharmacist must keep the medicine waste secure and arrange for collection by a local waste management company.

Disposal of any waste of S8 medicines should be recorded in your medicine register.

Transfer of medicine stock to another pharmacy

Pharmacies may transfer stock to another pharmacy as part of an arrangement with the pharmacist to prevent the stock from expiring or to urgently fill a shortage of stock held by the other pharmacist. In doing so, a standard purchase order should be made by the receiving pharmacy to make a record of the transaction and an invoice given by the supplying pharmacy. For a simple purchase order template, see:

www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/1110821/tpl-purchase-order.pdf

Further information

For more information contact your local Public Health Unit (PHU):

www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/contact/public-health-units



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care

Chief Pharmacists
Australian States and Territories

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to provide advice on a temporary Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Continued Dispensing (Emergency Measure). A PBS Continued Dispensing Emergency Measure will commence immediately on **4 February 2025** and remain in place until **31 March 2025** to support access to PBS medicines during the flooding disaster in far North Queensland.

Please note that these arrangements are legally underpinned by the *National Health (Continued Dispensing – Emergency Measure) Determination 2025*, which provides for temporary access under Continued Dispensing arrangements to all Section 85 medicines, which is a wider range of medicines than those available under ongoing arrangements under the National Health (Continued Dispensing) Determination 2022.

These Emergency Measure arrangements do not apply to the supply of pharmaceutical benefits in accordance with special arrangements made under Section 100 of the Act or supplies made under ‘prescriber bag’ arrangements.

System updates to PBS Online have been implemented by Services Australia at very short notice to allow for the payment of claims for PBS supplies made under these emergency arrangements from the date of commencement.

The Department acknowledges that third-party dispensing software used by pharmacies to claim payment for PBS supplies may not be able to be updated to enable the contemporaneous lodgement of claims in respect of items on the expanded list of medicines. In these circumstances, pharmacies may submit their Continued Dispensing claims that are not covered under existing (ongoing Continued Dispensing) arrangements claims instead at the next available opportunity, once their third-party dispensing software has been updated.

Pharmacies may wish to contact their software providers to enquire about the timeframes applying to these software updates.

Pharmacies are being advised to record all information normally required for a PBS Continued Dispensing claim. For items covered under these Emergency Measure Continued Dispensing arrangements that require authority approval from Services Australia, the emergency authority approval number A2022CD should be used. For all claiming enquiries, please contact the PBS General Line via telephone number 13 22 90.

As you are aware, on 1 July 2022, the medicines available under ongoing Continued Dispensing arrangements were expanded as recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). The Australian Government has arrangements to support people affected by natural disasters and other emergencies to continue to access their PBS medicines at the usual PBS cost. These temporary emergency arrangements complement existing emergency supply provisions available under state and territory legislation, such as the three days emergency medicine supply without a prescription, "owing prescription" arrangements, electronic prescribing and Medical Benefits Schedule telehealth items. These alternative provisions should be considered before utilising PBS Continued Dispensing arrangements.

To receive a PBS medicine supply under PBS Continued Dispensing arrangements the person's therapy must be considered stable, and any person who has received a PBS medicine under these emergency arrangements will not be eligible for another supply under this temporary arrangement as a pharmacist may supply a PBS medicine to a person under Continued Dispensing arrangements once in a twelve-month period.

The *National Health (Continued Dispensing – Emergency Measure) Determination 2025* is made under subsection 89A(3) of the National Health Act 1953. You may wish to review your legislation and make any necessary amendments as required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Richardson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca Richardson
Assistant Secretary
Pricing and PBS Policy
Technology Assessment and Access Division
4 February 2025