



**The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia**
ACT Branch

Submission to the 2025-26 ACT Budget Consultation

Supporting patients to access more health services through community pharmacies and reducing pressure on the ACT's health system

Contact

Simon Blacker, ACT President
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
simon.blacker@guild.org.au

Liz Lang, ACT Branch Director
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
liz.lang@guild.org.au

Introduction

The ACT Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (the Guild) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission as part of the 2025-26 Budget Consultation process.

This submission makes recommendations to implement ACT Labor's health pre-election commitments such as pharmacist full scope of practice reform. The ACT Liberals and ACT Greens also provided their written pre-election commitment to the implementation of pharmacist full scope of practice.

Funding of pharmacist full scope of practice training will support community pharmacies to deliver accessible, cost-effective health services for Canberrans in their local communities at a time and destination of their choosing. Health and community wellbeing is identified as one of the ACT Government's core areas of responsibility within the Budget consultation process.

Economic analysis of pharmacists working to full scope of practice across 11 conditions show there are annual cost-savings of \$3.2 million to the ACT health system¹.

Pharmacist full scope of practice in the ACT will also alleviate pressure on the health care system, freeing up 84,000 consultations in primary care, 1,100 hours in emergency services and 3,500 days in hospital care services².

More than one in 10 ACT voters are waiting three or more weeks for a GP appointment³. Almost one fifth of ACT voters were forced to attend ED due to a lack of GP access⁴.

There is overwhelming community support for pharmacy full scope of practice (89%) in the ACT⁵. As a further step forward with scope of practice, in February 2025, the ACT Government enabled approved pharmacists across Canberra to be able to treat uncomplicated UTIs and resupply the oral contraceptive pill for eligible patients. For full scope of practice to be implemented in the ACT in the first quarter of 2026, pharmacists need to be able to commence training as soon as possible.

Implement Full Scope of Practice Reform

Recommendation 1: That the ACT Government invest \$2.4 million over four years through a training subsidy to support 400 ACT community pharmacists to undertake prescribing and clinical training to expand their scope of practice in line with the Queensland model of expanded scope of practice.

According to Ahpra 2023-24 figures, there are 786 registered pharmacists in the ACT. The recommended ACT Government training subsidy will not cover the full cost of training which

¹ EY, Scope of Practice Opportunity Assessment, 2023

² ibid

³ Polling research commissioned by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia November 2024

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

is being delivered through James Cook University in Queensland and the Australasian College of Pharmacy.

We understand that the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has made a Budget submission which asks for \$2 million over 2 years to fully fund 180 pharmacists.

The Queensland Government has provided scope funding of \$6 million and the Northern Territory Government has provided \$1 million. It is understood further jurisdictions are in the process of developing programs for announcement.

The Queensland full scope training, which runs over 12 months, is rigorous and requires a significant time (estimated 1 day a week) and financial investment from pharmacists to complete. Fully trained scope of practice community pharmacists would be able to treat a range of acute and chronic conditions such as treating asthmatics with preventative medication and diagnosing and treating minor ear, nose and throat infections.

The recommended ACT Government training subsidy would assist more ACT pharmacists to access and complete the training and then provide these services in the 81 community pharmacies conveniently located across Canberra. It would significantly ease the burden on the ACT health system including emergency departments.

The ACT Branch of the Pharmacy Guild has been in discussions with the University of Canberra Pharmacy School regarding delivery of expanded scope of practice training in the ACT. An ACT government training subsidy would greatly assist local provision of training.

Vaccines

Vaccines are one of the best preventive health measures to protect people against debilitating and life-threatening diseases. With easy availability and extended trading hours including evenings and weekends, community pharmacies are playing a greater role in helping to protect their local communities.

Pharmacists being able to administer all vaccines for all ages would increase vaccine uptake, particularly for those people who may visit a pharmacy but otherwise not routinely attend any other health service.

Community pharmacists to be able to administer all vaccines under the National Immunisation Program (NIP). This would increase NIP uptake for high-risk patient groups that regularly visit a pharmacy (e.g. older people, First Nations people and people with chronic health conditions) including opportunistic uptake for high risk-people.

On behalf of the ACT's 81 community pharmacies, we look forward to working further with the Government to further implementing scope of practice to provide better health outcomes for patients, reduce costs to the health system, free up primary care appointments and reduce pressure on emergency departments.

We would be pleased to discuss our Budget submission further. Please contact our Branch Director Liz Lang in the first instance on liz.lang@guild.org.au or 0459 758 327.