

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health and Aged Care

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

Inquiry into the Assessment and support services for people with ADHD

29 June 2023

PDR Number: IQ23-000055

ADHD medications and the standardised national system for prescribing

Spoken

Hansard page number: 51

Senator: Jordon Steele-John

Question:

Senator STEELE-JOHN: Okay, thank you. We as a committee have heard that there are different regimes and regulations around these medications in each state and territory. They all seem to be different, creating challenges for individuals who are prescribed in one state, move to another state and seek to fill their prescription et cetera. Can you identify for the committee any work that the department is undertaking to advocate for a more standardised national system?

Ms Rishniw: Senator, you're right, and we discussed the schedule 8 listing of those medications because of their addictive nature. My understanding is that the TGA is currently undertaking some work around that view of state consistency in terms of the regulation of those medications, but, as you would appreciate, I am not from the TGA, so can I take on notice to get you the detail of that?

Senator STEELE-JOHN: Yes, please. That would be very good, thank you.

Answer:

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) is aware of the national inconsistency in prescribing arrangements for some ADHD medications between jurisdictions.

Psychostimulants often used as treatments for ADHD are Schedule 8 (S8) 'controlled drugs' under the Commonwealth Poisons Standard.

Scheduling is a national classification system that controls how medicines and chemicals are made available to the public. Medicines and chemicals are classified into Schedules of the Poisons Standard according to the level of regulatory control needed to protect public health and safety.

Scheduling is intended to promote uniform access across Australia. There is a national policy for applying access restrictions, the Scheduling Policy Framework, that has been agreed to by the Commonwealth and all state and territory health ministers.

However, the Poisons Standard is implemented under state and territory legislation. Establishment of the specific access controls and their enforcement is a matter for state and territory governments. States and territories determine which healthcare professionals can prescribe medicines that are in the Poisons Standard, and the controls over prescribing practices.

As such, prescribers of psychostimulants must meet state and territory-based requirements in order to be able to prescribe these medicines for ADHD. Generally, the prescription of psychostimulants is limited to psychiatrists and paediatricians under state and territory legislation.

Where sufficient evidence exists to support changes to the scheduling of medicines, there is an existing pathway by which applications can be submitted to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to propose changes.

The Government is also considering options by which uniformity in the implementation of scheduling controls can be examined and promoted with states and territories. Progression of this work would be subject to the agreement of all states and territories. Any change to current arrangements would require significant legislative reform and likely rely on state and territory legislative powers.