



Australians with chronic disease say it's time to strengthen investment in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)

- *New report finds Australians with chronic illnesses are missing out on medicines that would help them remain actively involved in their work, families and communities.*
- *Survey shows high levels of frustration that newer treatments available overseas remain unavailable in Australia or must be paid for in full because they are not publicly funded on the PBS.*
- *Without timely access to new medicines on the PBS, Australians with chronic illnesses say they will have to make tough sacrifices or face impact on quality of life and ability to contribute to society.*

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, 29 October 2025 – A new report released by Pfizer Australia in collaboration with the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance and Eczema Support Australia highlights overwhelming public support for greater investment in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The report, '[Innovation and Access: A Stronger PBS for Australia](#),' focuses on the impact of medicine access issues for Australians living with chronic conditions, who often rely on medicines to manage their symptoms and remain active participants in family life, work and their communities.

An estimated 12 million Australians live with a chronic or complex condition, according to the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance.¹ More than eight in 10 (83%) Australians with chronic illness access at least one medicine on the PBS. However, international data show only one in four (24%) medicines launched globally between 2012 and 2021 were reimbursed in Australia.²

The report includes results from a 2025 survey of 2,000 Australians, conducted by Pfizer to understand how Australians are accessing medicines through the PBS, including people with chronic disease. The survey respondents most commonly reported mental health conditions (33%), cardiovascular conditions (30%), arthritis (27%), diabetes Type 1 and Type 2 (24%) and chronic pain (24%) as conditions they or someone close to them have experienced. The survey found more than three quarters (77%) of people with lived experience of chronic illnesses say medicines can have a significant positive impact on their ability to manage daily activities. However, seven in 10 (71%) were frustrated that treatments available overseas remain out of reach for them in Australia due to cost.

Without timely access to new medicines on the PBS, Australians are making tough sacrifices:

- One in five (22%) have been unable to try a new medicine because of the cost.
- Four in 10 (40%) have had to pay for a new medicine in full because no subsidy was available, leaving many under significant financial pressure.
- One in 10 (11%) are currently taking medicines not listed on the PBS or subsidised by the government.

Deidre Mackechnie, Executive Officer, Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance, said: "Access to new medicines is one of the biggest challenges Australians living with chronic and complex illnesses face. Behind the numbers are countless Australians who are missing out on



treatments that could help them live well and stay involved with their work, family and community. It's time we invested in them, by strengthening our investment in the PBS."

The survey found high levels of support for strengthening investment in the PBS:

- Nine in 10 (92%) agree government subsidies are critical to making medicines more affordable for those with chronic conditions.
- More than eight in 10 (85%) support increased government investment to make these medicines more affordable.

Melanie Funk, Managing Director, Eczema Support Australia, said: "Eczema places a heavy burden on Australians, particularly the more than half a million people living with moderate to severe disease. Whilst some progress has been made, the reality is the current system is not working as well as it could. Unacceptable delays and affordability barriers remain, and we need PBS reforms to ensure Australians can access innovative new treatments in a timely and equitable way."

Anne Harris, Managing Director, Pfizer Australia and New Zealand, said: "For more than 75 years, the PBS has been the backbone of affordable medicines access in Australia. But as science and medicine advance, the system must keep pace. The data and community commentaries in the report illustrate what we have heard for some time: Australians are waiting too long for crucial treatments and often medicines simply are not reaching Australians at all.

"It's time for a modernised PBS. With strengthened investment, we can ensure the PBS is faster, fairer and fit for the future, and can meet the needs of Australians living with chronic and complex illnesses."

As a member company of Medicines Australia, Pfizer Australia supports the pharmaceutical industry's #StrongerPBS campaign led by Medicines Australia. For more information visit www.strongerpbs.com.au

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About the report

Research into the beliefs and experiences of Australians regarding access to medicines for chronic illnesses was commissioned by Pfizer Australia in collaboration with the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance and Eczema Support Australia.

The quantitative research survey was conducted in January 2025, sampling 2,000 Australian adults aged 18 years and over, and resembling the Australian population in terms of gender, age, state, and location. Of the 2,000 people sampled, over 1,200 (64%) had lived experience of a chronic illness including those living with a chronic illness, caring for someone with a chronic illness e.g., a close family member or friend. Of the sample population, 69% lived in a metropolitan area, 26% in a regional area and 6% in a rural area. This is a statistically representative sample size.

Following completion of the survey, the findings were shared with various patient groups via the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance and directly to understand how the results reflect community experiences. Comments and reflections from patient advocacy group leaders on the survey data are contained in the [Innovation and Access: A Stronger PBS for Australia](#) report.



Additional survey data

Experiences related to medicine access issues:

- At least eight in 10 (82%) people with a chronic illness (as reported by them directly, their carer or someone close to them) were taking medicines regularly.
 - 11% were taking medicines not currently subsidised by the government.
- Various subsidy criteria can restrict access:
 - 17% have experienced either themselves or someone they are close to being unable to get a medicine on the PBS because the condition or symptoms were not severe enough.
 - 19% have experienced either themselves or someone they are close to being unable to access a medicine on the PBS because it was not subsidised for their condition (but it is for another condition).
- Lack of subsidy can also affect prescribing behaviour, with 21% of people stating that the cost of a medicine impacted a doctor's decision-making when prescribing treatment for a chronic condition.

Financial:

- Many Australians are willing to make sacrifices to cover the cost of new medicines that could improve their health including:
 - Financial sacrifices (60%)
 - Finding cheaper alternatives (51%)
 - Lifestyle changes (48%)
 - Cutting essential expenses (46%).
- 87% agree that the process for subsidising new medicines could be improved to make chronic disease treatments available faster.

Perceptions of government and the PBS:

- More than half (55%) of Australians don't think the government is 'doing enough' to make new medicines accessible.
 - Reasons why people believe the government isn't doing enough include perceptions that the government has other priorities, medicines remain expensive, and the process takes too long.
- Less than a third of Australians have a good understanding of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

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About Pfizer: Breakthroughs That Change Patients' Lives™

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and manufacturing of health care products, including innovative medicines and vaccines. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time.

Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments and local communities to



support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more than 175 years, we have worked to make a difference for all who rely on us. For more information, please visit: www.pfizer.com.au.

About Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance

The Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance is a collective of national health organisations, working together to represent more than twelve million Australians living with complex and chronic disease. We exist to provide better outcomes for all patients living with complex and chronic disease. We work alongside national peak advocacy organisations to achieve reforms in the Australian healthcare system, through a coordinated approach to government on behalf of our members and the patients they represent. We drive efficient and effective communication between member organisations and the federal government, allowing patient voices to make a meaningful impact on health strategy and decision making. For more information, please visit: <https://patientadvocacyalliance.org.au/>

About Eczema Support Australia

Eczema Support Australia was built on the core belief that all families and individuals dealing with chronic conditions deserve community support. Our vision is for all Australians living with eczema to overcome their difficulties and thrive in their community through connection, information and advocacy. We provide practical support to reduce the feelings of isolation and manage patients' eczema journeys. For more information, please visit: <https://www.eczemasupport.org.au/>

Disclosure Notice

The information contained in this release is as of 29 October 2025. Pfizer assumes no obligation to update forward-looking statements contained in this release as the result of new information or future events or developments.

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¹ Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance. About. Available at: <https://apaa.au/about/>. Accessed October 2025.

² PhRMA. 2023. Global Access to New Medicines Report. Available at: <https://phrma.org/resource-center/Topics/Access-to-Medicines/Global-Access-to-New-Medicines-Report>. Accessed October 2025.