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Australians deserve faster access to new medicines

Parliamentary Inquiry to hear from pharmaceutical leaders today

MSD will today appear at one of the first hearings for the Parliamentary Inquiry into approval processes for new drugs and novel medical technologies in Australia.

Mr Michael Azrak, Managing Director of MSD Australia and New Zealand, will speak about the need for change to Australia's pharmaceutical reimbursement system alongside other well-known pharmaceutical industry leaders.

MSD Australia made a submission to this Parliamentary Inquiry in October 2020 and strongly believes this Inquiry represents a real opportunity for government and industry to do more for Australian patients by working together to solve on-going access delays to medicines.

Government and industry have demonstrated significant collaboration throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and this good work can be extended to all Australians who are diagnosed with illnesses whose treatments remain out of reach and not on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Mr Azrak is eager to address the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport to highlight the unique opportunity for the pharmaceutical industry and government to reform the health technology assessment (HTA) system in Australia: "Our regulatory authority, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is now proudly world-class, following reforms since 2018 to accelerate how we register medicines for Australian patients. We believe that our HTA system can be world-class too."

"While accelerating registrations for medicines in Australia provides great promise for patients, other countries such as Japan, Germany and the UK, fund new medicines four times faster than our HTA system in Australia¹. Some new medicines in Australia can take up to 410 days since registration to be listed on the PBS¹ which is too long for patients to wait for treatment options," continued Mr Azrak.

“We have an opportunity to become a world leader in ensuring patient access to medicines, alongside countries like us who are already doing this - the UK, Germany and Japan. Our reimbursement process for medicines must be accelerated to ensure that Australian patients have the best reimbursed access to medicines in the world.”

“To achieve this, we believe that the process that subsidises medicines in Australia (*HTA*) could be changed so that medicines registered by the TGA are listed on the PBS within 90 days. This length of time is possible – we have seen it done before as an exception rather than the rule – and is in line with world leaders who provide subsidised access to medicines, such as Japan (89 days), Germany (117 days), and the UK (128 days)¹,” continued Mr Azrak.

“2020 demonstrated the importance of the pharmaceutical sector to the health of Australians. In 2021, the Australian Government and our pharmaceutical industry can together ensure patients have faster access to innovative medicines,” said Mr Azrak.

-ENDS-

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About MSD

For 130 years, MSD has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases in pursuit of our mission to save and improve lives. MSD is a trade name of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., U.S.A. We demonstrate our commitment to patients and population health by increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, MSD continues to be at the forefront of research to prevent and treat diseases that threaten people and animals — including cancer, infectious diseases such as HIV and Ebola, and emerging animal diseases — as we aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world. For more information, visit www.msd-australia.com.au and connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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References

¹ Medicines Australia. 2018. Comparison of Access and Reimbursement Environments: A report benchmarking Australia's access to new medicines: Edition 4.