

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

NAME: Bob Bowden

POSITION: Consultant

ORGANISATION: Australian Self Medication Industry

SUBMISSION1: The Medicines Partnership of Australia (MPA) is an alliance of peak industry associations representing key members in the supply chain that deliver medicines and pharmacy expertise to Australian consumers.

The members of MPA are Medicines Australia, the Australian Self-Medication Industry, the National Pharmaceutical Services Association, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Generic Medicines Industry Association.

As such, the MPA represents every part of the network responsible for providing medicines and information about appropriate medication to consumers. It covers manufacturers of prescription medicines, manufacturers and distributors of non-prescription and generic medicines, community pharmacy and national medicines distributors.

To date many government funded health campaigns have focused on shifting behavioural attitudes to issues such as smoking, and the evidence suggests these have largely been successful. It is the follow up phase to these public health campaigns in which the MPA is in a unique position to play a role.

For instance, having had considerable success in presenting the arguments why smokers should quit, one of the critical next steps for public health campaigns becomes the how smokers can quit. In a similar vein, the latest public health campaigns targeting obesity focus on the means by which people can actively determine whether they need to take action to address their weight. It is in these practical, action-based initiatives that the MPA network can operate at a number of levels to assist and co-ordinate in such areas, including:

- co-ordination and national distribution of public health literature ensuring coverage across the health channel
- ensuring that relevant information and advice is made available to pharmacies and brought to the attention of customers via pharmacists and pharmacy assistants

One simple example demonstrates how the MPA might assist government in a current public health initiative. The Commonwealth without consultation moved away from Body Mass Index (BMI) as an obesity measure. Many pharmacy based programs and product referrals are based on BMI.

Anecdotal reports to pharmacists suggest that many people are measuring at the incorrect circumference point and are arriving at a falsely low result. It is only if a patient approaches a pharmacist for assistance that an incorrect result can be detected.

MPA considers that a pharmacy based campaign, provided at no charge to patients, could have been part of an integrated health message. A relatively low cost kit with appropriate information and health literature could have been distributed via MPA to pharmacies in all parts of Australia.

On a more routine level, MPA is in a position to assist the work of the taskforce in specific areas, notably obesity and smoking where success is dependent, amongst other things, on sound coordination and wide dissemination, including to Indigenous communities.

As a means of advancing such an initiative, the MPA suggests that a checklist or industry impact statement be implemented by government to ensure that all industry stakeholders are promoting the same consistent message to consumers as follows:

1. Stakeholder identification - identifying who will be affected both directly and indirectly by any health initiative.
2. Stakeholder consultation - identifying how an initiative may affect each stakeholder including the appropriateness of existing information and messages.
3. Stakeholder "buy-in" - working with stakeholders to provide consistent messages, or assistance in the event that new procedures or information are required
4. Stakeholder involvement - engaging the stakeholders in distribution of information and promotion of the initiative.

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit