Communique – Interim Pharmacy Roundtable (IPR) Meeting held 16 June 2020

The Interim Pharmacy Roundtable (IPR) held its seventh meeting on 16 June 2020 via videoconference. The IPR had not met since February 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IPR discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic had placed increasing pressure on community pharmacies throughout Queensland, and commended pharmacy owners and their staff for their hard work in helping to keep Queenslanders safe during the health crisis. The IPR reiterated that community pharmacists and their teams are vital healthcare providers and remain on the frontline of public health by serving as direct points of access for their patients. The IPR commended the community pharmacy industry on how they have implemented the new emergency arrangements benefiting Queenslanders.

The IPR noted that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the delivery of the government's response to a number of recommendations made by the Committee and the Queensland Audit Office were suspended. Other work packages under the Government Response continued. This included the work to procure a fit-for-purpose ICT solution to support and enhance stewardship of pharmacy business ownership. The IPR noted the well constituted evaluation panel, which includes representatives with relevant legal and ICT technical expertise. Additionally, the panel also includes a voluntary community member with expertise in community pharmacy. As the industry representative, this member will work with Queensland Health throughout the design and test phase of the ICT solution to optimise external business needs.

The IPR was provided an update on the continuation of the statewide trial of the management of uncomplicated urinary tract infections by pharmacists. The IPR noted that an amendment to the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 authorises pharmacists participating in the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) trial to supply medicines for the treatment of uncomplicated UTIs. Further, the amendment will allow women who have an immediate need for an oral contraceptive to access a full pack of any oral contraceptive from a pharmacist, whether or not covered by the PBS Continued Dispensing Determination. These changes will allow women to obtain an interim supply of any contraceptive pill once within a 12-month period if their prescription has expired. IPR members commended Queensland Health's efforts during a pandemic in delivering this broader healthcare team reform for community pharmacy's continued dispensing, while ensuring safe and quality access to medicines.

As the initial 12-month term of the IPR membership was nearing its end, all members agreed to remain on the IPR for up to another 12 months. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, the Honourable Steven Miles, has since provided letters of offers to members to support the transitional arrangements, noting the IPR has only been re-established as an interim measure for up to another 12 months while the department works through legislative processes to establish a Pharmacy Council.

The Chair of the IPR, Mr. Tim Logan on behalf of all IPR members congratulated Dr Jeannette Young, PSM, Chief Health Officer, Queensland Health, for the way in which she and the department have dealt with, and implemented, the government response to the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Logan also thanked and acknowledged the time, effort and commitment the IPR members provided over the previous 12 months.

A timeframe for the next IPR meeting is yet to be determined.