Medicines and Poisons Act 2019

Factsheet – current as at September 2021

General approvals

What is a general approval?

A general approval is a type of substance authority under the Act that authorises a person to carry out a regulated activity with a regulated substance stated in the approval.

What classes of general approvals are provided for?

The Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021 (MPMR) prescribes three (3) different classes of general approvals for carrying out different types of regulated activities:

- general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites) for carrying out the regulated activities that are dealings with medicines mentioned in schedule 16, part 1;
- general approval (emergency first aid) for carrying out the regulated activities that are dealings with medicines mentioned in schedule 16, part 2;
- general approval (emergency management of animals) for carrying out the regulated activities that are dealings with medicines mentioned in schedule 16, part 3.

Bespoke general approvals outside the three (3) prescribed classes may also be granted to applicants to cater for unique or unusual circumstances. Applications for such general approvals will be considered carefully, on their merits, and having regard to specific criteria.

What is the purpose of a general approval?

A general approval is a case-by-case approval that can be made by the chief executive of Queensland Health (or delegate). A general approval authorises the approval holder to undertake a regulated activity with the regulated substance stated in the approval, under the conditions stated in the approval or as standard conditions stated in the MPMR.

It is appropriate to prescribe classes of general approvals by regulation due to the range of diverse activities that are captured, and the need to respond flexibly if further activities need to be added in the future. Further, it is necessary to prescribe standard conditions under the MPMR due to the technical nature of such conditions. Prescribing the conditions in the MPMR allows flexibility if changes are required to be made.

The Act introduces a more streamlined approval process and gives more flexibility to entities such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), as entities may apply for a general approval to cover all individuals (rather than many separate applications being made for each individual working for an entity).

Once the entity obtains a general approval, individuals are not required to hold their own approval. The entity will be responsible for ensuring the development of, and adherence to, adequate governance measures, policies and procedures, and training to manage the public health and safety risks associated with the regulated substance/s included in the general approval.

Having an entity-based approval system gives an entity more visibility over its employees and volunteers and allows the entity more flexibility to perform its tasks. This added visibility will make it easier to issue directives or information about policy changes to employees and volunteers.

Associated guidance documents

- Acute health conditions at isolated sites – factsheet
- Emergency first aid - factsheet
- Emergency management of animals – factsheet

Further information

For further information, contact the Healthcare Approvals and Regulation Unit:

- Email: HARU@health.qld.gov.au