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Mr John Woollard
Director
The Health Protection Service
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Dear Mr Woollard,

Re: HCCA Response to the Continued Dispensing of Medicines in Defined Circumstances in the ACT Consultation Paper.

HCCA was formed over 30 years ago to provide a voice for consumers on local health issues and now provides opportunities for health care consumers in the ACT to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the consultation on continued dispensing of Medicines in Defined Circumstances in the ACT. We support the proposal to amend the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008 to enable the Continued Dispensing initiative to be implemented.

The Continued Dispensing initiative is a positive step for consumers, particularly those living with chronic conditions, as it makes it easier to access medications in urgent situations where therapy would be otherwise disrupted.

We support the implementation of the initiative in the ACT because it supports a nationally consistent system. (For instance, different provinces in Canada currently allow different prescription volumes and/or length of validity which causes considerable difficulty for consumers moving interstate).

We also note that the implementation of the Continued Dispensing initiative will need to be closely monitored and audited throughout implementation, with the results made publicly available. Consumers have expressed disappointment with the Pharmacy Guild in the past for not abiding by conditions or keeping members accountable.

On page 5 of the consultation paper, one point needs clarification. The document states that "pharmacists will only be able to receive funding for one supply of an eligible medicine during a 12-month period." We assume the intended meaning is that pharmacists will be eligible to receive funding for one supply *per person* during a

12-month period. This would need to be explained in detail for pharmacists prior to implementing the initiative.

We have no issue with the inclusion of oral hormone contraceptives and lipid modifying agents in the initial stages of implementation, but would hope that the number of medications included in the initiative will be expanded following a preliminary review. For instance, consumers would like to see other chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis and asthma included in the scope of the initiative. Currently, consumers find it frustrating that they are forced to pay to visit the doctor every few months to renew their prescription for a medication they know they will need to continue taking for a long time. For consumers with chronic conditions, this can be expensive and time consuming.

We also urge that pain control medications such as opiates be considered for inclusion in the Continued Dispensing initiative as chronic pain represents a major issue for many consumers in the ACT.

We are happy to discuss our submission further,

Health Care Consumers' Association