



# Medicine wholesalers to continue to co-operate on COVID-19 response

13 September 2021

The ACCC has granted interim authorisation to medicine wholesalers to continue to co-operate in providing fair and efficient access to essential medication and pharmacy products as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

The new interim authorisation also allows the National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA) to collectively negotiate on behalf of its members with the Commonwealth government in relation to possible COVID-19 vaccine distribution arrangements.

"This interim authorisation granted by the ACCC enables the medicine wholesalers to respond quickly if the Government chooses to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to pharmacies through the wholesalers," ACCC Chair Rod Sims said.

The NPSA applied to the ACCC this month on behalf of its members for authorisation to engage in this conduct. The ACCC previously authorised similar conduct [in September 2020](#) for a period of 12 months.

"Australia is still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic including the growing impact of the Delta strain, so it remains in the public interest to allow pharmacy wholesalers to work together to ensure people continue to have access to critical medicines during times of high demand," Mr Sims said.

"The ACCC interim authorisation will facilitate pharmacy wholesalers entering into discussions and arrangements for the distribution of the vaccines to pharmacies to meet demand as well as to ensure minimal waste of the available vaccine."

Any co-ordination by pharmaceutical wholesalers will continue to be subject to oversight from government and other regulatory bodies, and the ACCC will receive regular reports, including about any co-ordination for COVID-19 vaccine distribution should the NPSA and Department of Health enter into an arrangement about its distribution.

The ACCC will now seek feedback on the application for authorisation which is sought for a period of 12 months. More information, including the ACCC's statement of reasons, is available on the ACCC's website at [National Pharmaceutical Services Association](#).

## Background

ACCC authorisation provides statutory protection from court action for conduct that might otherwise raise concerns under the competition provisions of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010.

Broadly, the ACCC may grant an authorisation when it is satisfied that the public benefit from the conduct outweighs any public detriment. The ACCC may review a decision on interim authorisation at any time, including in response to feedback raised following interim authorisation.

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