

## Telehealth Prescribing

The Australian Government is fast-tracking implementation of electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) as part of its COVID-19 National Health Plan.

**ACT legislation<sup>1</sup> supports electronic prescribing.** Practitioners who are ready and using conformant software may commence use of electronic prescriptions for their patients.

Further information about electronic prescriptions is available [here](#).

The Australian Government has enabled the dispensing and claiming of pharmaceutical benefits using a digital image (photo, scanned copy or pdf) of the prescription as an interim measure to support telehealth services.

Under the Australian Government interim arrangements<sup>2</sup>, the dispensing and claiming of pharmaceutical benefits using a digital image are allowed, including:

- A digital image (photo, scanned copy or pdf) of the entire prescription sent to the patient's pharmacy of choice directly from the prescriber via email or text message (**Digital Image Prescriptions**), or
- A copy of the entire prescription sent to the patient's pharmacy of choice directly from the prescriber via fax (**Faxed Prescriptions**).

**Digital image and faxed prescriptions are enabled by ACT legislation<sup>1</sup>.** Further information about these types of prescriptions is listed below.

Further information about the Australian Government interim prescribing arrangements for [prescribers](#) and [pharmacists](#) are available via these links.

**Telephone (verbal) prescriptions are also enabled by ACT legislation<sup>1</sup>.** An original written prescription must be sent to the pharmacy within 24 hours of being given verbally. Written includes in electronic form. Telephone prescriptions are not claimable under the Australian Government interim arrangements.

**The supply of schedule 4 (prescription only) Appendix D and schedule 8 (controlled) medicines using electronic, digital image, fax or telephone prescriptions is enabled under ACT legislation<sup>1</sup>.**

**It is critical that prescribers send prescriptions directly to the patient's pharmacy and have the necessary ACT standing or Chief Health Officer approval in place in order to mitigate**

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<sup>1</sup> Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008

<sup>2</sup> National Health (COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Special Arrangement 2020

**risk of diversion or duplicate dispensing of Appendix D or schedule 8 medicines that may be subject to abuse or misuse.**

Prescribers and pharmacists are also reminded to use the DORA real time prescription monitoring website to support patient care for those requiring treatment with a controlled medicine. Further information about ACT DORA is available [here](#).

## Digital Image Prescriptions

**Digital image prescriptions transmitted electronically are enabled by ACT legislation<sup>1</sup>.**

**A digital image prescription must be sent from the prescriber directly to the patient's pharmacy of choice. Digital image prescriptions should never be given directly to the patient.**

Under ACT and Australian Government interim arrangements, prescribers are not required to send a printed paper prescription to the pharmacy. The Australian Government interim arrangements require a prescriber to retain the prescription for at least 2 years.

Prescribers should also obtain and record patient's consent to send the prescriptions electronically.

The PBS and RPBS interim arrangements are only for prescriptions written as a result of telehealth attendance or phone attendance provided on or after 20 March 2020. The PBS and RPBS interim arrangements are temporary and will cease in accordance with the COVID-19 National Health Plan which is currently scheduled to cease on 30 September 2020.

## Faxed Prescriptions

The PBS and RPBS interim arrangements and ordinary arrangements<sup>3</sup> allow pharmacists to supply pharmaceutical benefits from a copy of prescription sent via fax.

**Faxed prescriptions are also enabled by ACT legislation<sup>1</sup>.** ACT pharmacists may claim for pharmaceutical benefits supplied on a faxed prescription according to the PBS and RPBS interim arrangements.

Under the Australian Government interim arrangements, a prescriber is required to retain the original of a faxed prescription for at least 2 years, which is permitted by ACT legislation.

Pharmacists are required to confirm that the faxed prescription was written as part of a telehealth consultation in order to meet the ACT record keeping requirements and should make a record of this.

Verbal advice from the prescriber or patient is considered sufficient for this purpose.

Prescribers can also confirm this in writing on the faxed prescription.

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<sup>3</sup> National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulations 2017

If a faxed prescription was not written as part of a telehealth, ACT legislation requires:

- the **prescribers to send the original prescription to the pharmacy within 7 days** of sending it via fax<sup>4</sup>.
- the **pharmacists** to notify the Pharmaceutical Services Section of the Health Protection Service (on behalf of the Chief Health Officer), in writing, if they fail to receive the original prescription of a faxed prescription **within 14 days of dispensing of the prescription**<sup>5</sup>. Notifications may be sent to [pss@act.gov.au](mailto:pss@act.gov.au) or via fax 02 5124 9309.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 31 of Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008

<sup>5</sup> Section 120(g) of Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008