



Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-payment Program Changes – Frequently asked Questions

What is the Closing the Gap (CTG) Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Co-payment program?

The CTG PBS Co-payment program was established in July 2010 to improve access to affordable PBS medicines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with, or at risk of, chronic disease, and who in their doctor's opinion would experience setbacks in the prevention or ongoing management of chronic disease if they did not take the prescribed medicine and would be unlikely to adhere to their medicines regimen without assistance through the program.

In May 2020, it was announced through the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement, that changes would be made to enhance the program.

When will the changes take effect?

The CTG PBS Co-payment program changes will come into effect on 1 July 2021.

What is changing?

- A new centralised patient registration database for the program, managed by Services Australia, will go live.
- Any PBS prescriber or AHPRA registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner registered with Medicare as a provider can register eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the program.
- Eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be registered for the program no matter where they live, and regardless of their chronic disease status.
- Registration of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be via the Health Professional Online Services (HPOS).
- This registration will cover Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people even if they move to a different health clinic.



- PBS prescribers will no longer be legally required to write or electronically print 'CTG' on eligible PBS prescriptions for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, annotation of a PBS script will help community and Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacists, when dispensing the medicines, know that the patient is registered for the program.
- Any PBS prescriber can issue PBS General Schedule medicine prescriptions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are registered for the program.
- PBS prescriptions issued by PBS prescribers within public hospitals will now be eligible to be dispensed by any community pharmacy or Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacy.
- If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are registered for the program the PBS Online claiming system will verify this in real time. If the "Closing The Gap" field in the dispensing system has been completed, this will trigger the correct pricing. If that field has not been completed, a claim will be rejected and will need to be resubmitted.

What is not changing?

- The program will continue to be for self-identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (people of any age) only, and no other patient groups.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are already registered for the program will continue to be registered. Current registration details will be transferred to the new database.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will still need to be assessed by their practitioner as being eligible for program registration.
- Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacies can still dispense PBS prescriptions covered under the program.
- Section 94 Public Hospital pharmacies will still **not** be able to dispense PBS prescriptions covered under the program.
- The program will continue to apply to prescriptions for PBS General Schedule medicines only.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will still need to be registered for the program before a reduced co-payment will be applied to PBS General Schedule prescriptions when being dispensed.

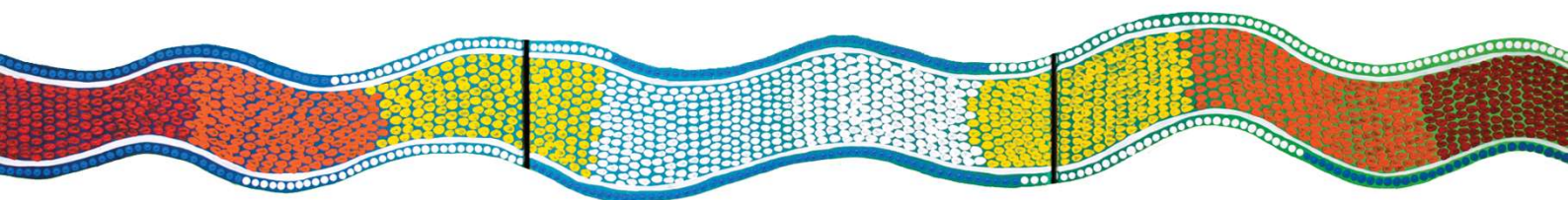
How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people register for the program?

If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not already registered for the program they will need to talk to their practitioner to see if they are eligible for registration.

What is the eligibility criteria for people to be registered for the program?

The eligibility criteria is a person who:

- identifies themselves to the practitioner as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
- in the opinion of the practitioner, would experience setbacks in the prevention or ongoing management of a condition if the patient did not adhere to a course of treatment; and



- in the opinion of the practitioner would be unlikely to adhere to the course of treatment without assistance from this program; and
- is enrolled with Medicare.

What if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people no longer want to be registered for the program?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can phone Services Australia on 132 290 or go to a Service Centre or Access Point to advise they no longer wish to be registered for the program.

How much will Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people registered for the program pay for General Schedule PBS medicines?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are registered for the program but do not have a Concession Card will pay \$6.60 (current as of 1 January 2021) for the majority of PBS General Schedule medicines.

If registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a Concession Card they will receive the majority of their PBS General Schedule medicines for free.

What medicines are covered under the program?

The program applies to prescriptions for PBS General Schedule medicines only. Those are PBS medicines made available under Section 85 of the *National Health Act 1953* (the Act).

PBS medicines supplied under a special supply arrangement established under Section 100 of the Act are not covered under the program.

PBS medicines provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on discharge from public hospitals, under the provisions of the Pharmaceutical Reform Agreements with individual states and territories, are not covered under the program.

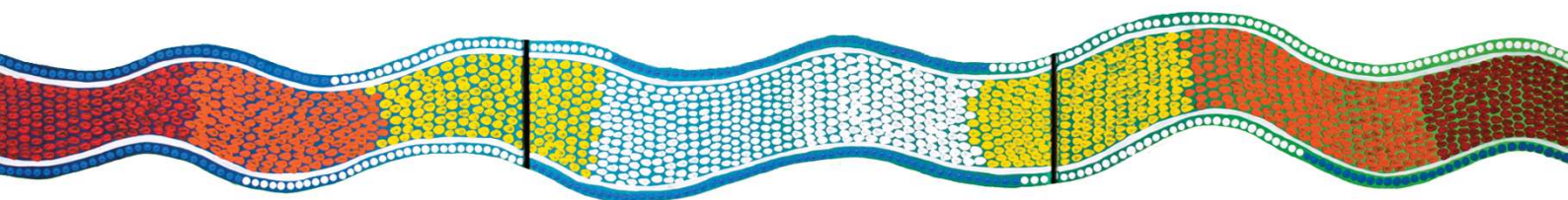
Where brand premiums apply to a PBS medicine covered under this program Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will need to pay the brand premium at the time of dispensing.

How can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find out if they are registered for the program?

From 1 July 2021, if a patient is unsure whether they are registered for the program, their Practitioner or the Pharmacist will be able to check via Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) for them.

What is the purpose of the “CTG” annotation on a PBS prescription?

The “CTG” annotation on PBS prescriptions indicates to community pharmacists that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are registered for the program. This will assist community and



Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacists when entering information into their dispensing system.

If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are registered for the program the PBS Online claiming system will verify this in real time. If the “Closing The Gap” field in the dispensing system has been completed, this will trigger the correct pricing. If that field has not been completed, the claim will be rejected and will need to be resubmitted.

Will PBS prescriptions that are not “CTG” annotated be covered under the program?

If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are registered for the program at the time the PBS medicines are dispensed, the co-payment reduction will apply to prescriptions for General Schedule PBS medicines even if the prescription does not have CTG annotation.

CTG annotation will no longer be a legal requirement, but continuation of this practice is recommended so that community and Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacists are aware that the PBS script is to be dispensed under the program.

Please note: CTG Scripts can only be dispensed at community pharmacies or Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacies.

How can health services or clinics in remote areas without internet access register Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the program?

In remote areas with limited internet access, a health service or clinic can phone Services Australia on 132 290 to register the patient for the program.

Who can pharmacists direct dispensing software questions to?

Questions from pharmacists regarding changes to the dispensing software should be directed to the respective Software Vendor.

Where can Pharmacists get help in relation to their PBS claims?

Pharmacists can obtain help in relation to a PBS claim by phoning Services Australia on 132 290.

