

REGIONAL INDEPENDENT

14 February 2024

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Community News

Cheaper medicines for advanced melanoma and multiple sclerosis

From 1 February 2024, Australians with advanced melanoma and relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (MS) will have access to new and updated medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Australia has the highest melanoma rates in the world with one person dying from melanoma every six hours.

Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler, said "The Australian Government understands that many Australians are doing it tough, which is why we are committed to making medicines cheaper and more affordable for all Australians."

"These listings will have a profound impact on people's lives - and the lives of the people around them."

"Alongside cheaper prescriptions, 60-day scripts and encouraging more doctors to bulk bill, we are making health care more affordable and helping to ease the cost of living burden for everyday Australians."

The combination medicine nivolumab with relatlimab (Opdivo®) will list to treat patients with advanced stage melanoma that has spread to other parts of the body and cannot be removed by surgery.

Around 940 patients each year are expected to benefit from this listing. Without the PBS subsidy, they could pay around \$315,000 per course of treatment.

Tebentafusp (Kimmtrak®) will list for the first time to treat a certain type of advanced melanoma of the middle layer of the eye (uvea) that has spread to other parts of the body or cannot be removed by surgery.

Uveal melanoma is a rare cancer, with around 150 Australians diagnosed each year.

Around 35 patients are expected to benefit from this listing each year. Without the PBS subsidy,

they could pay around \$790,000 per course of treatment.

Natalizumab (Tysabri®) is currently available through the PBS for patients with relapsing-remitting MS. From 1 February, these patients will now have access to a new subcutaneous form of Tysabri®, which means it can be given as an injection under the skin. This will reduce administration time and expand the settings for treatment.

About 85 per cent of people with MS are diagnosed with relapsing remitting MS, making it the most common form of MS.

MS affects the brain and spinal cord and is often diagnosed in

young adults between 20 to 40 years old. In MS, the body's immune system reacts against its own myelin, which protects and insulates nerve fibres. In relapsing-remitting MS, people have attacks called relapses, which can cause blurred vision, weakness in the legs or arms, or loss of control of bowel or bladder function.

Without PBS subsidy, patients may pay around \$16,400 per year of treatment with Tysabri®.

Since July 2022, the Australian Government has approved extra funding for 165 new and amended listings on the PBS.

More volunteers are needed to provide ethics classes for children in our region

Do you have an hour a week to spare to help deliver ethics classes to children in our region?

The Primary Ethics program is now operating in all four government primary schools in Queanbeyan, and is also offered at primary schools in Bungendore, Jerrabomberra and Sutton, but more volunteers are needed to meet the demand for classes.

The program was introduced over 10 years ago, with lessons delivered by volunteers from the school community, as well as the broader community, and there are currently about 40,000 NSW children attending weekly ethics classes in more than 500 NSW schools.

Ethics lessons invite children to explore everyday situations that raise ethical issues such as truth and lying, getting even, greed, being fair or unfair, cheating, friendship, drugs in sport, being an ethical consumer.

Through stories and scenarios pitched at their level, children are invited to share ideas on what they ought to do in typical situations.

Regional Manager Jim Neely, who is also a volunteer ethics teacher, said that being a volunteer ethics teacher is a small way to make a big difference.

"Teaching ethics is one of the most satisfying things I've done" he said. "It is very rewarding to



see the children discuss issues thoughtfully and listen to each other. In the world they are growing up in it is so important for children to have these skills."

Fellow volunteer at Queanbeyan South Public School, Christine Huber, says:

"As someone who enjoys thinking about the shades of grey in life and what it takes to live a good life, the opportunity to train and volunteer with Primary Ethics seemed logical to me. As well as developing some new skills and knowledge for myself, the chance to give to the school community by helping students to develop critical thinking skills makes the role really rewarding. One of the best things about joining this program at QSPS has been the fantastic thoughts that the students come up with in our discussions on some really engaging topics."

Jim said that volunteers come from all walks of life, and you don't need any teaching experience.

Importantly, all lesson materials are provided by Primary Ethics, and class groups are kept small to enable all children to contribute. Free training is also provided by Primary Ethics, which can be done on-line or in person.

"As the commitment only involves about an hour a week during school term, many of the volunteers are working and are able to fit it into their schedules".

For more information visit the Primary Ethics website: primaryethics.com.au, or contact Jim at jim.neely@primaryethics.com.au or on 0451517815.

Image supplied of Volunteer ethics teachers Natasha Clugston, Maggie Turnbull and Ange McDonald and Jim Neely

Bungendore Seniors 55+



The Bungendore Seniors Association Inc. is happy to announce that we

now trialling get together fortnightly on Thursdays as well as fortnightly on

alternate Fridays, so mark your calendar and join us on Thursday or Friday or come along to both.

Enjoy great conversation, a few laughs, some games and morning tea.

We meet at 10am at the Bungendore CWA Rooms, Gibraltar Street, Bungendore. Cost is \$5.00 per person, which includes a delicious morning tea.

Yearly membership is only \$5.00 per person. We welcome everyone interested in joining the group.

For more information contact Sharon on 0419 025 533 or email bungendoreseniors@gmail.com

THURSDAYS	
Feb	
Thurs 15th Feb	
Thurs 29 Feb	
March	
Thurs 14 March	
Thurs 28 March	
April	
Thurs 11 April	
ANZAC DAY (25/4)	
May	
Thurs 9 May	
Thurs 23 May	

FRIDAYS	
Feb	
Fri 23 Feb	
March	
Fri 8 March	
Fri 22 March	
April	
Fri 5 April	
Fri 19 April	
May	
Fri 3 May	
Fri 17 May	
Fri 31 May	

Regional Independent

The Regional Independent is the only free, printed, weekly, independent, community newspaper within the Queanbeyan-Palerang local government area.

Distribution is 5,200 copies every week and covering the entire Queanbeyan-Palerang local government area

We welcome local stories. For editorial and advertising enquiries please email: info@regionalindependent.com.au or phone Sharon Baxter-Judge on 0419 025 533.

The Regional Independent is produced and distributed from our base located in Bungendore within the traditional lands of the Nounawal and Nounam peoples. We acknowledge and pay our

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&
Play



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