



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health**

**Image based prescribing – FINAL EXTENSION to 31 December 2021**

I am writing to inform prescribers, dispensers and stakeholders that a final extension of the image-based prescribing arrangements will be put in place until **31 December 2021**. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders for your contribution to the uptake of electronic prescribing – electronic prescribing is now widely available nationally, with over 70% of prescribers, and over 98% of pharmacists issuing and dispensing electronic prescriptions.

As you are aware, the Department of Health introduced the National Health (COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Special Arrangement 2020, also known as ‘image-based prescribing’ in March 2020 as an interim arrangement while electronic prescribing capabilities were being developed.

Given electronic prescribing is now widely available, the decision to extend image-based prescribing is to provide an emergency option for exceptional circumstances where electronic prescribing or other mechanisms cannot be used, particularly where communities continue to be affected by state-wide COVID-19 lockdowns.

While image-based prescribing arrangements will cease after 31 December 2021, healthcare providers will continue to have options that existed before image-based prescribing (in addition to electronic prescribing) to enable remote support to their patients. Factsheets on the supply of prescriptions via telehealth for [prescribers](#) and [dispensers](#) have been updated to reflect these changes.

We also continue to listen to feedback from stakeholders, and SMS costs associated with electronic prescribing will continue to be covered until 30 June 2022 while the Department finalises long term funding for the Electronic Prescription Delivery Service.

While the Commonwealth Department of Health sets out some standards and restrictions on access to medicines, State and Territory Governments regulate medicines and prescriptions. Further information regarding specific legislation and options to assist in each jurisdiction for image-based prescribing can be found [here](#). Please contact your respective jurisdiction authority for more details.

If you have further questions, please contact [eprescribing@health.gov.au](mailto:eprescribing@health.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel McCabe'.

Daniel McCabe  
First Assistant Secretary  
Benefits Integrity and Digital Health Division  
3 September 2021