MEASURES TO INCREASE THE USE OF GENERIC MEDICINES SECTOR

Consumers should be provided with better information on generic medicines said the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, and the Minister for Industry Tourism and Resources, Ian Macfarlane.

The measures include an information campaign to increase understanding of generic medicines by consumers and health professionals.

The Government is talking with the states and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that the dispensing labels will have to display the name of the active ingredient in a medicine more prominently than the brand name. This should mean that consumers are clear they are taking the correct medicine even if they choose a cheaper brand.

The Government is considering publishing on the internet a list of interchangeable bioequivalent products and typical prices. All bioequivalent medicines will be shown as interchangeable in the Schedule of Pharmaceutical Benefits.

“There is a need for better understanding about the high quality and often lower cost to consumers of our Australian generic medicines.

“I have often heard confusion from consumers and doctors about generic medicines. In this country they are of excellent quality assured by the Therapeutic Goods Administration,” Mr Abbott said.

“This announcement is a timely boost for the Australian generic medicines industry which exports nearly $900 million a year and employs around 3,000 people.

“Many drug patents are set to expire over the next five years and this gives us the opportunity to build a more competitive generic medicines sector through a process of education and clearer labelling,” Mr Macfarlane said.

Generic medicines currently account for 18 per cent of the medicines dispensed under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

“This is less than half the market share in the United States and the United Kingdom. The measures announced tonight will help improve this balance, while providing savings for consumers,” Mr Macfarlane said.