

Electronic Prescribing in South Australia

Electronic prescribing provides an option for prescribers and their patients to use an electronic prescription as an alternative to a paper-based prescription.

In line with the [National Digital Health Strategy](#), electronic prescribing will assist with the aim to have “digitally enabled paper-free options for all medication management in Australia by 2020”. This will allow people to manage prescriptions electronically which will increase convenience and improve medication safety.

Electronic prescribing principles

The Australian Government Department of Health leads the national work on electronic prescribing and is undertaking activities to support health professionals, software developers and patients understand how electronic prescriptions are generated, received and dispensed. The following describe high level electronic prescribing principles:

- > **Security of patient information (privacy)**
Electronic prescribing must maintain the safety and privacy of current and historical patient and prescription data.
- > **Integrity of prescription data (safety)**
Electronic prescribing must maintain the integrity of prescription data to ensure patient safety.
- > **Continues to support patient choice of prescriber and pharmacy**
Electronic prescribing will continue to support a patient’s right to choose their approved prescriber and the pharmacy to supply their medications
- > **Electronic and paper prescriptions will co-exist as the legal form of the prescription**
Electronic prescriptions and paper prescriptions will co-exist. Electronic prescribing will not be mandatory, and patients and prescribers will be able to choose either an electronic or paper prescription.
- > **National electronic prescribing framework**
Paper and electronic prescriptions will continue to meet the relevant Commonwealth and State and Territory legislation.
- > **Supports existing prescribing polices**
Electronic prescribing does not fundamentally change how current prescribing and dispensing processes operate.

Electronic prescriptions in South Australia

To recognise an electronic prescription as a legal form of a prescription requires amendment to South Australia’s *Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011* (the Poisons Regulations).

The Poisons Regulations will detail the approved form of the electronic prescription and (for prescribers who are doctors, nurse practitioner, dentists, optometrists and midwives) link this to the requirements under the *National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulations 2017*.

The regulations which describe the legal requirements for *how a prescription is to be given, written prescriptions and dispensing prescriptions (regulations 33, 34 and 35 of the Poisons Regulations)* will be amended to include electronic prescriptions.

Electronic prescribing will not fundamentally change how current prescribing and dispensing processes operate and all relevant existing prescription requirements in the Poisons Regulations will need to be met when writing an electronic prescription or electronic medication chart prescription.

What are the technical requirements for electronic prescribing?

The Australian Digital Health Agency has developed the technical framework to support electronic prescriptions. This technical framework details the requirements for clinical software to ensure alignment with the legal framework, adherence to privacy and security principles and maintenance of patient choice.

The Commonwealth has also made changes to the PBS claiming system to support dispensing arrangements for electronic prescriptions.

When are the changes occurring?

The Commonwealth enabled PBS electronic prescribing in late 2019, through changes to the *National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulations 2017*.

On 22 March 2020, the Australian Government announced they will fast track the implementation of electronic prescribing systems to help protect people most at-risk in our community from exposure to COVID-19 as part of the \$2.4 billion [National Health Package](#).

South Australia's Poisons Regulations are proposed to be amended as a matter of priority to enable electronic prescriptions as part of a nationally consistent electronic prescribing framework.

More Information

- > For information about the Commonwealth changes which enable [PBS electronic prescribing](#), please contact the Department of Health at ePrescribing@health.gov.au
- > For information about the Technical Framework for electronic prescribing, please contact the [Australian Digital Health Agency](#)
- > For information about the regulatory changes in South Australia to facilitate electronic prescribing, please contact Medicines and Technology Programs, SA Health at Health.MTPP@sa.gov.au

For more information

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