

Calls to prioritise diabetes medicines for Aboriginal communities

Peak diabetes organisations are urging the Federal Government to act now and prioritise access to diabetes medicines for Aboriginal communities in rural and remote areas.

Diabetes Australia, Australian Diabetes Society and Australian Diabetes Educators Association are calling for prioritised access to vital medicines for Aboriginal communities where rates of type 2 diabetes are the highest in the world.

Diabetes Australia Acting Group CEO Taryn Black said the global shortage of GLP-1 agonists like Ozempic is having a serious impact on the diabetes community, particularly in parts of Australia where rates of type 2 diabetes are disproportionately high.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more than three times as likely to live with diabetes and nearly five times more likely to be hospitalised with diabetes-related complications,” Ms Black said.

“We know that new medicines like GLP-1 agonists are highly effective, so we need to ensure that they are available in areas of most need.

“In Australia, that means prioritising access for Aboriginal communities in rural and remote areas where high rates of type 2 diabetes are having a devastating impact on peoples lives,” she said.

Grace Ward, Elder Advocate at Diabetes Australia and Kamilaroi-Yuwaalaraay diabetes educator, said the burden of disease from type 2 diabetes in Aboriginal communities was a major issue with up to 40% prevalence rates in Aboriginal adults in Central Australia.

“Worryingly, the age of diagnosis is also getting younger,” Ms Ward said.

“This week we recognised National Close the Gap Day. Health equity is a key theme of closing the gap.

“Governments should prioritise working with communities, seeking solutions to address the barriers to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people living with type 2 diabetes, by providing access to critical diabetes medicines including GLP1-s.

“This would improve diabetes management and prevent complications,” Ms Ward said.

Australian Diabetes Society CEO Sof Andrikopoulos said newer medications need to be provided to remote communities without restriction.

“Access to diabetes medicines needs to be provided without delay to Aboriginal communities in central Australia in particular, in order to address the significant burden of disease in these communities,” Mr Andrikopoulos said.

Australian Diabetes Educators Association CEO, Susan Davidson, said credentialled diabetes educators (CDEs) are working hard across the country to support people living with diabetes but medicines are essential.

“CDEs provide support for the use of GLP-1s, as well as advice on exercise and healthy eating.

“The prioritisation of GLP1’s for Aboriginal communities where there is highest need will support health professionals in providing the critical care that is needed for people living with diabetes,” Ms Davidson said.

About DA, ADS and ADEA

Diabetes Australia, the Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) and the Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) represent 1.5 million Australians living with known, diagnosed diabetes; approximately 500,000 Australians living with silent, undiagnosed type 2 diabetes; and around 2 million Australians living with prediabetes; as well as their families and carers, diabetes healthcare professionals and researchers.

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