

# Letter from the Chief Medical Officer



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Aged Care**

Dear Primary Care Provider

## **COVID-19 oral treatments are saving lives thanks to the efforts of primary care providers**

Protecting those most at risk from severe COVID-19 illness, and preventing hospitalisations and deaths, is a critical priority for the Australian Government.

Oral antiviral treatments have been a game changer in responding to that priority.

As we have now marked six-months since Molnupiravir (Lagevrio) and Paxlovid were first released for use in Australia, I want to take this opportunity to thank you again for all you do on the COVID-19 healthcare frontline.

Since February 2022, over 290,000 antiviral prescriptions have been dispensed under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). These new medications have likely saved tens of thousands of lives and many hospital admissions: older Australians, First Nations people and those living with compromised immunity or disability.

Without the cooperation and support of primary care providers like yourself, the rollout of the oral treatments would not have had the significant impact it has

among these high-risk groups.

The pandemic is not over, therefore I encourage you to continue engaging with your patients, pre-assess their suitability for treatments wherever possible and discuss advanced consent, noting a prescription cannot be issued in advance i.e. without a positive verified RAT or PCR test.

As reinfection rates increase and vaccine immunity wanes across the population, please remember that the oral antiviral treatments are safe, effective and available.

Furthermore, there is no limit to prescribing a subsequent course under the PBS criteria if an eligible patient tests positive again. This is especially important in residential aged care, where residents were among the very first to commence their vaccination program in 2021.

Thank you for all your efforts in the ongoing fight against COVID-19.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Paul Kelly  
Chief Medical Officer  
4 October 2022