



The Hon. Greg Hunt, MP  
Minister for the Health  
PO Box 647  
Somerville  
Vic 3912

12/6/19

Dear Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Hunter General Practice Association committee to urge the rapid implementation of a Real Time Prescription Monitoring Service (RTPMS) across the country. It is a very real and daily anxiety in our work as prescribers that we will miss an at-risk patient and contribute to their death. Current systems are inadequate and the [death toll](#)\* attributable to prescribed medication is rising. We ask you to consider the recommendations of the [RACGP](#) , [AMA](#) and multiple Coroners and act now to implement a RTPMS.

As detailed by Magistrate Harriet Grahame, NSW Deputy State Coroner, in her 27 July 2018 [inquest findings](#), the current systems for identifying patients accessing multiple practitioners are not sufficient. When reflecting on our own "near misses" the cumbersome and insufficient Prescription Shopper Information Service (PSIS) system is repeatedly identified as an issue. We find that,

- the parameters are too rigid (eg. only captures patients if >6 prescribers),
- it fails to identify all high risk medications,
- it fails to identify privately written scripts and
- it is too time consuming and confrontational to readily fit in to work flow.

We understand that RTPM has been long discussed as a [federated model](#) but we are disappointed by the [lack of a timeline](#). We ask that you either expedite the role out of a national system, or support a state-based solution for NSW, as has been implemented in Tasmania and Victoria. We have written to the NSW Health Minister to this effect. [Evidence from Tasmania](#) shows a reduction in death rates and prescription shopping since the introduction of the [Drugs and Poisons Information System Online Remote Access \(DORA\)](#) and grass root discussions are positive regarding the accessibility and ease of use for the newer [Safescript](#) system, rolled out in Victoria last year.

We acknowledge and agree with the governments focus on safe prescribing education and management of chronic non-cancer pain. However, this is a partial solution and does not address the issues with the current PSIS. As part of an overall strategy, an RTPM it would be a sensible and achievable method for reducing death from prescription drugs.

We would be happy to meet and discuss. Please contact via email [jcgoswell@gmail.com](mailto:jcgoswell@gmail.com), [lfong@hunterprimarycare.com.au](mailto:lfong@hunterprimarycare.com.au) and [jwood@hunterprimarycare.com.au](mailto:jwood@hunterprimarycare.com.au), or phone 0409 784 276.

Yours faithfully,

Dr John Goswell

President Hunter General Practitioner Association

\*In 2016 there were [1293](#) deaths by road traffic accident and [1808](#) drug induced deaths. Most of the drugs involved in these deaths are prescription.