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MEDIA RELEASE

NPSA members rally to deal with fire emergency

Members of the NPSA have adjusted delivery schedules and seconded other resources to deliver essential medicines during the unprecedented bushfire emergency in New South Wales and Queensland.

Team members at Symbion, Sigma and API warehouses along the eastern seaboard have been remapping distribution routes and working with emergency services to ensure pharmaceutical deliveries can be made to patients in communities impacted by the fires.

NPSA Chairman Mark Hooper said that extra efforts put in by staff in fire affected communities underlines the commitment of all NPSA members to ensuring Australians can always access critical medicines, even in times of crisis.

“Our members are part of Australia’s critical infrastructure for health services and we take that role seriously every day, but at times like this we know that it is up to us to go beyond what government asks us for and deliver what the community needs,” he said.

“Major fires like these can have crippling impacts on community health so it’s critical that we can continue to deliver essential medicines into these fire affected regions.

“As part of this, our members are working closely with the federal and state governments to support the emergency medicine provisions that are currently in place for parts of New South Wales and Queensland.”

While closures of some major highways have continued to pose challenges, the companies have used creative solutions to ensure they can deliver essential healthcare products to impacted communities.

“There have been some instances where sudden road closures have meant we’ve had to stay out of harm’s way and go to plan B,” said Symbion NSW Operations Manager Paul Sporbert.

“In one instance, we secured refrigerated trailers from a couple of logistics companies to use as temperature-controlled storage at their Newcastle depots. This meant that, while we hadn’t been able to get to them the day before, we were able to get deliveries through to customers around three hours earlier once the roads opened than if we had started from Sydney.”

API has continued to provide a continuous supply of medicines to every fire-affected area and has financially assisted local pharmacies to give their communities the supplies they need.



“Some of our pharmacies have been lending support to their communities since some of the fires began in the mid-north of NSW some weeks ago, not just with supplying products but also through providing their time and support for people doing it tough,” said API CEO Richard Vincent.

“The stores have been able to supply nappies and formula to mums and toiletries to people who have lost everything, even going as far as supporting the animal shelters for badly injured wildlife with medical equipment and product.

“We’ll continue to help these stores as they assist their community to rebuild once the initial crisis has passed.”

In addition to pharmaceutical deliveries to patients, Sigma partnered with suppliers to provide broader community support by offering free everyday household products to drought and fire-affected families at Amcal, Guardian and Discount Drug Stores in the Tenterfield (NSW), Warwick (QLD) and Stanthorpe (QLD) areas.

“These communities are doing it tough, and we saw an opportunity to help through our branded stores,” said Mr Hooper, who is also the CEO of Sigma.

“We collaborated with suppliers to donate and send close to \$60,000 worth of everyday essential items to stores for distribution through the community.

“It just underlines once again how the commitment of everyone in the supply chain is so important to healthcare in our communities.”

The National Pharmaceutical Services Association represents CSO wholesalers Australian Pharmaceutical Industries, National Pharmacies, Sigma Healthcare and Symbion.*

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***Community Service Obligation Wholesalers, on behalf of the Australian Government, supply around 300m PBS medicines per year to Australians regardless of where they reside within 24 hours of ordering.**