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EXCLUSIVE

Albanese Government makes \$5000 offer to 'real' chemist workers

Australians working in chemists have a chance for a big payday to promote a new Albanese Government scheme.

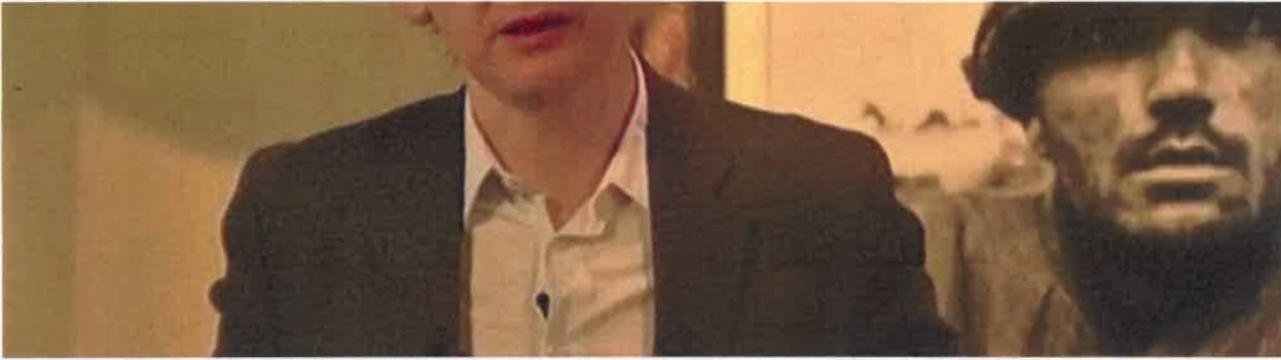
Samantha Maiden



@samanthamaiden 3 min read May 5, 2023 - 6:24PM

26 comments





Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has called for releasing detained WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange – declaring 'enough is enough'. The Australian has been behind bars in the United Kingdom for more than four years and continues to fight potential extradition to the United States.

The Pharmacy Guild has been accused of a blatant campaign of misinformation after it claimed the Albanese Government was offering pharmacists \$5,000 to appear in a new ad.

A casting call for cash-strapped pharmacists is offering \$5,000 for “real” workers in chemists to appear in a new ad for “the Australian Government” has been revealing by a major casting agency.

Pharmacists say is about spruiking a two for one script deal.

“We are searching for actual PHARMACISTS and EXPERIENCED PHARMACY ASSISTANTS who live in Sydney or Canberra or Goulburn/Crookwell region, to feature in a series of photographs and video footage for the Australian Government Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS),” the casting call states.

“No professional acting experience is required. All cast will be paid \$5,000 ea

“Filming and photography dates: 16 - 30 May 2023. (1 x 8 hr day) Applications close early May, 2023.”

As controversy rages over the changes that will save patients money but are opposed by pharmacists, some chemists have started handing out material attacking the Albanese Government over the changes.



\$5,000 is on offer for “real” workers in chemists to appear in a new ad.

But while a casting call has gone out for the ad - the Albanese Government is denying the ad has anything to do with them.

“This is not a casting call for a Government advertising campaign,” a spokeswoman said.

“The Government has not commissioned any advertising for its 60 day dispensing policy.

“This is another example of misinformation from the pharmacy lobby about a government policy which will deliver significant savings and cheaper medicines to more than 6 million patients across Australia.”



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Picture: Chris Kidd

Previously, before the Albanese government lowered the co-payment to \$30 in January, patients were paying \$42.50 for one month's supply.

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But under the two-for-one deal, instead of paying \$85 for two scripts, patients purchasing eligible medicines will pay just \$30.

Concessional patients will now pay \$7.30 per 60-day script.

Chemists oppose the savings arguing it could spark medicine shortages and short-change pharmacists.

The casting agency organising the shoot does work for Home and Away, Underbelly, Wolf Creek and various other movies and TV.

The Pharmacy Guild is up in arms over the ads insisting it will ultimately see chemists lose money and could see patients face medicine shortages.

Pharmacy Guild NSW President David Heffernan attacked the expenditure and called on the Health Minister Mark Butler to cancel the ads.

"Instead of wasting taxpayer money on TV ads and models to promote their policies, the Government should be investing in patients and community pharmacies," he said.

"It's a kick in the teeth that at the same time that the Government is ripping \$3.5 billion out of community

pharmacies and reducing patient care, that they'd use thousands of dollars of taxpayer money on shiny ads.

“There is a real cost of living crisis across our community and cheaper medicine, not promotional material, should be where taxpayer money is invested.

“We are calling on Mark Butler to cancel these ads and put the money into cheaper medicine for patients.”



Australians working in chemists have a chance for a big payday. Picture: Lea Emery

Pharmacy Guild economic modelling, using data provided by the Department of Health, claims the policy will cut \$3.5

billion in patient care to communities around Australia over the next four years.

This \$3.5 billion cut is made up of a \$1.2 billion saving to the Budget in Government dispensing fees, with community pharmacies expected to pay for a further \$2.3 billion in patient fees for the policy.

National President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Trent Twomey said the Government needed to return \$3.5 billion to community pharmacies or millions of patients would miss out on care and medicines.

Australian Patients Association Dr Nick Coatsworth said the savings in costs to consumers were a fantastic outcome, but if that is only partly absorbed by government and passed on to pharmacies,

“We're concerned about the implementation of this policy, and the detail is important. For example, currently, large numbers of drugs are in short supply, and these changes could lead to patients missing out on medications due to those shortages,” he said.

“Secondly, the experience of other countries suggests that we can expect increases of hoarding of drugs by consumers, increasing numbers of tablets being stored in cupboards,

which coincides with increases in medication errors. Overflowing home medication cupboards is a safety hazard. Imagine the grandchildren coming around and getting into a cupboard with 450 pills in it” he said.

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