New laws making over-the-counter medications containing codeine available by prescription only will take effect on Thursday.

Doctors and patients alike have been divided by the legislation, which will see products containing codeine from brands including Panadeine, Nurofen, and Codral removed from shelves.

Associate Professor and GP Dr Ayman Shenouda of Glenrock Country Practice said these changes were in patients' best interests.

"I think it's a good decision because and we often forget codeine is an addictive medication, and before you start patients on addictive medications you need to be mindful of their history," Dr Shenouda said.

"This is all about the helping the patients and looking after them adequately — if you don't, you could be sending their life into a disaster."

Dr Shenouda acknowledged that these changes will likely result in longer waiting times and heavier loads on GPs in the region.

"It will affect timing and create a bit of an extra load of work, so there is an extra effort attached, but it's for the best interests of our patients," he said.

The people making these decisions have never had to be in this situation in their lives, and it's obvious they haven't consulted with people that have been.

A Wagga mother with Crohn's disease

A Wagga mother, who did not wish to be named, suffers from Crohn's disease and occasionally uses over-the-counter medications containing codeine to manage the chronic pain that accompanies her condition.

She is extremely worried about what the new codeine laws will mean for her and other patients.

"One major side effect is body aches and pains, so it will feel like I've got the flu 24 hours a day and seven days a week for two weeks at time," she said.

"With my disease in particular, it can happen instantly — I've been getting ready for work or walking out the front door and then suddenly I'm doubled over in pain."

While the legitimacy of her condition means she will be able to access the medication via a GP’s prescription, she said the issue is more complicated than that.

"I'm going to have to try get into a local GP, but the way I'm seeing it is that I can't afford to keep doing that on top of all my other medical expenses," she said.

"It's hard enough to get a doctor's appointment now, let alone when you're going to have another 100 plus people waiting.

"The people making these decisions have never had to be in this situation in their lives, and it's obvious they haven't consulted with people that have been."

Related coverage:

- **Codeine-based medications to become prescription only**
- **Residents fear new codeine rules will clog medical services**

This story [Concern rife as codeine laws take effect](https://www.theherald.com.au/story/5200748/concern-rife-as-codeine-laws-take-effect/) first appeared on The Daily Advertiser (Gurra).
1. Home
2. News
3. Local News

January 31 2018 - 5:00PM

Doctors and patients divided as over-the-counter codeine medications are removed

- Claudia Farhart

Local News

- SHARE
- TWEET
- Comments
The woman from the NSW Riverina—who did not want to be named for privacy reasons—said the February 1 ban has had unintended consequences, which are hitting people in the bush particularly hard.

She said people who had previously used over-the-counter painkillers containing codeine were now faced with not only the cost of a GP visit and a prescription, but were also increasingly being refused the drugs at all and instead being urged to see a pain specialist.

The woman, who has suffered chronic pain for two decades, said she was prescribed a transdermal patch for an opioid-based medication and had previously bought Panafen Plus over the counter when she suffered bouts of "breakthrough pain".

She said the increased cost was a particular issue for chronic pain sufferers because their medical conditions often restricted their ability to work.

The woman’s experience is that pain specialists are relatively few in number, have long waiting lists, and not all of them bulk bill their patients.

“I found one specialist in Canberra who does bulk bill, but the waiting list is 14 months and growing daily,” she said.

The woman is not opposed to the codeine ban. But she said it seemed to have been introduced without enough thought as to how to help people—particularly those in rural Australia—cope with the changes.

A spokesperson for Pain Australia said other people were reporting the same issues as those raised by the Wagga woman.

The National Rural Health Alliance has this week released the results of a survey that found out-of-pocket medical expenses for some country people amounted to thousands of dollars a year.

The alliance’s chief executive officer Mark Diamond told The Daily Advertiser people in regional areas faced longer waits and had limited treatment options.

Mr Diamond said rural patients had less access to bulk-billed services, and seeking specialist treatments was complicated by distance and cost.

Read more:

- Doctors and patients are divided as codeine is removed from shelves

**Daily Advertiser**

---

**RECOMMENDED**

- **NSW mill deaths: 'Hard to describe how tragic this is'**
  **NATIONAL**

- **One firm’s $350k cargo lost at sea as container fall off ship...**
  **LOCAL NEWS**

- **Brock Lamb tempted by greener pastures**
  **LOCAL SPORT**

- **No more paper receipts or lost dockets for business fuel**
  **SHELL**

- **Beautiful South Pacific Islands You Never Knew You Wanted to...**
  **CARNIVAL CRUISES**

- **Experience the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail in NZ**
  **TOURISM NEW ZEALAND**

- **Train between cities is anything but pretty**
  **YOUR SAY**

- **Do you know the best time to back a horse?**
  **BEFAIR**

Ban on over-the-counter codeine sales is 'hurting regional people'

Judy Lidleck

A ban on over-the-counter sales of codeine has had a massive impact on chronic pain sufferers in regional Australia, according to one woman.