

# AUSTRALIA

**None of the medicines** launched in 2016 were approved in Australia first or within one month of their first approval by another country's regulatory body<sup>1</sup>

In 2016, medicines took an average  
**372 days**  
 to receive approval in Australia<sup>1</sup>

**27 of the 55** medicines to treat cancer that were launched globally between 2012 and 2016 **were not available in Australia by 2017**<sup>2</sup>

## Use of Cost-Effectiveness Leads to Access Restrictions in Australia

Australia utilizes multiple methods to limit spending on medicines, including international reference pricing, therapeutic reference pricing, and health technology assessments with lowest cost comparators.<sup>3</sup>

The health technology assessments, which help to determine reimbursement for medicines covered through Australia's public health insurance, utilizes quality-adjusted life year (QALY)-based cost-effectiveness assessments.<sup>4</sup> Application of these stringent assessments have resulted in challenging barriers for patients in Australia where innovative new medicines are often placed out of reach for those who need them.

“We are concerned that lives have been put on hold and lungs have incurred irreversible damage whilst we struggle to get a fair deal [a] year behind approval in the USA and Europe.”

Cystic Fibrosis Western Australia Chief Executive<sup>5</sup>



Keytruda, a medicine that saved the life of former U.S. president Jimmy Carter,<sup>6</sup> is still unavailable to hundreds of cancer patients in Australia, where the treatment is only approved for certain types of cancers. Many patients have been forced to pay out of pocket or set up fundraisers to pay the total cost of the treatment after finding out the immunotherapy would not be covered by their insurance.<sup>7</sup> Halouma Pittock, whose tumors have reduced in size since beginning Keytruda, said she felt “terrified” when she found out she would be responsible for the full cost of the treatment. “The government will only pay for immunotherapy for four types of cancer...and mine doesn't come under that. **When it's life or death, you would think it would be covered.**”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Innovation in Regulatory Science. ‘New drug approvals in six major authorities 2007-2016: Focus on the internationalisation of medicines.’

<sup>2</sup> IQVIA. Global Oncology Report, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government Department of Health. <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/hta/publishing.nsf/Content/commonwealth-1>

<sup>4</sup> Economic evaluation of medicines. (2017). Australian Prescriber, 40(2):76–8.

<sup>5</sup> “WA families hail public funds for cystic fibrosis drug.” *The West Australian*, August 2018.

<sup>6</sup> “President Jimmy Carter Says Cancer in Brain Is Gone.” *NBC News*, December 2015.

<sup>7</sup> “Mandurah mum Halouma Pittock reveals impossible choice.” *The West Australian*, December 2018.

<sup>8</sup> “Halls Head woman fights for legislation change of costly life-saving cancer treatment.” *Mandurah Mail*, September 2018.