COMPLIANCE GUIDE · DRUG SAFES

SCHEDULE 8 DRUG STORAGE REQUIREMENTS BY STATE AND TERRITORY

Safe and cabinet requirements for Schedule 8 medicines in all eight Australian jurisdictions, as at November 2026, plus SCEC security containers explained.

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Schedule 8 medicines (controlled drugs, including many THC medicinal cannabis products) must be stored in a receptacle that meets the rules of the state or territory where they are held. There is no single national "drug safe" standard. This guide compares the storage requirements in all eight jurisdictions, as at November 2026, with links to the legislation and regulator documents.

Rules are set by each state and territory. The national Poisons Standard decides which medicines are Schedule 8. Storage requirements come from state and territory laws, codes and standards.

The common benchmark is 10 mm steel. VIC, QLD, SA, WA and the ACT describe a safe of 10 mm mild steel with continuous welds, a flush door and a 6-lever lock (or equivalent).

Big changes in 2026. NSW moved to new Medicine Storage Standards on 5 November 2026 (9 mm safe, 5-lever lock for pharmacies and vets). SA's new regulations and Code v3.0 started on 1 September 2026.

Fixing and detection matter as much as the safe. Most jurisdictions specify how the safe is bolted down or a minimum weight, and some require alarms or monitoring above set dose levels.

1. Comparison by jurisdiction

State / territory	Law relied on (version)	Main safe specification (typical pharmacy or clinic)	Fixing / weight	Alarm or detection	Lighter options
VIC	Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017, reg 74 (version 024, 14 Oct 2026)	Lockable facility at least equivalent to: 10 mm mild steel body and door, continuous welds, flush door (≤ 1.5 mm gap), welded locking bar, 6-lever lock	Attached to wall or floor to resist hand tools for 30 min or power tools for 5 min	No fixed trigger; the Secretary can direct higher security (reg 76)	Up to 6 emergency divided doses; aged care: lockable room or fixed facility (reg 75)
NSW	Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2026 and NSW Health Medicine Storage Standards (effective 5 Nov 2026)	Community pharmacies, vets, residential care and private facility stores: 9 mm mild steel body and door (≤ 1.5 mm gap), locking bar, 5-lever lock. Other places: secure lockable metal or hardwood cabinet or safe	"Robust fastening": 12 × 50 mm expanding bolts (masonry) or 10 mm coach screws (timber)	Alarms and CCTV required for wholesalers and manufacturers	Patient care areas: metal or hardwood cabinet or supervised drawer

State / territory	Law relied on (version)	Main safe specification (typical pharmacy or clinic)	Fixing / weight	Alarm or detection	Lighter options
QLD	Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021, s 197, and Departmental Standard "Secure storage of S8 medicines" v2 (from 1 Jul 2023)	10 mm mild steel, continuous welds, hinges that can't be removed to open the door, ≤ 1.5 mm gap, locking bar, 6-lever lock	Weighs more than 350 kg, or at least 4 bolts of at least 12 mm	Required for electronic storage units (monitoring or CCTV kept 35 days)	Fewer than 6 emergency doses or refrigerated stock: lockable hardwood or metal cupboard
WA	Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016, regs 94–98 and Schedule 3 (as at 29 Oct 2026)	"Small safe": 10 mm steel (or steel skin with 50 mm concrete fill), ≤ 1.5 mm gap, 6-lever, 4-wheel combination or equivalent digital lock. "Large safe" adds 2 × 32 mm locking bolts, minimum 250 kg	Small: 4 expanding bolts ≥ 12 mm. Large: 16 mm floor bolt (unless over 1 tonne), installed by a licensed safe installer	Practices: detection device above 250 doses; large safe plus detection above 500 doses	Pharmacist-supervised secure cabinet in pharmacies; approved alternatives
SA	Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2026, reg 29(f), and Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Drugs of Dependence v3.0 (Sep 2026)	10 mm mild steel, ≤ 1.5 mm gap, locking bar, 6-lever lock, 4-wheel combination lock or equivalent electronic lock	Weighs more than 350 kg, or expanding bolts or coach screws ≥ 8 mm	Every safe needs a detection option (supervision, monitored motion detector, CCTV kept 60 days, or alarmed or logged room), with small-quantity exceptions	Up to 30 doses: lockable hardwood or metal cabinet, drawer or bag
TAS	Poisons Regulations 2018, reg 29 (authorised version 7 Oct 2026)	An enclosure "constructed and secured in a manner approved by the Secretary". Pharmacy guidance describes approved floor safes of at least 500 kg, or approved in-floor safes	Pharmacy guidance: bolted and glued to a concrete floor	Not stated	Emergency supplies in a bag in a locked vehicle or room
ACT	Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008, ss 530–533A and Schedule 5 (republication 57, 26 Dec 2025)	Medicines cabinet: 10 mm black mild steel, ≤ 1.5 mm gap, locking bar, 6-lever pick-proof lock; or a Schedule 5 safe resisting attack for 30 min	Cabinet: 4 bolts ≥ 10 mm or embedded in concrete. Safe: over 350 kg or fixed	Required for an institution's chief pharmacist and for wholesalers	Some practitioners not at an institution: locked container attached to a building, or locked drawer, cupboard, room or vehicle (s 532)
NT	Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulations 2014, reg 31, and S8 Code of Practice Vol. 2 (2014)	Surgeries up to 15 doses: 15 mm hardwood cabinet, 5-lever lock. More than 15 doses unsupervised: AS/NZS 3809 Grade I. Pharmacies: Grade 0 to III by dose and supervision	Fixed to wall or floor, away from external walls	Pharmacy grade can drop one level with a monitored alarm, 24-hour supervision or patrols	Supervised areas: hardwood cabinet

Summary only. Each regime has more detail, exceptions and conditions than fit in a table; follow the source links. Several regulations still refer to resistance grades in AS/NZS 3809:1998, even though that standard was withdrawn in 2019; ask the regulator what they accept as equivalent.

2. Requirements that apply almost everywhere

- **Keep it locked** except when actually accessing it, and store only Schedule 8 (and permitted) substances in it.
- **Control keys and codes.** Keys must not be left in the door or hidden nearby; several jurisdictions say keys must carry no identifying markings. Change shared codes when someone with access leaves.
- **Not accessible to the public**, and generally out of sight.
- **Don't leave S8 in vehicles** overnight or unattended (QLD, WA and SA say this explicitly).
- **Refrigerated S8** must be in a locked, secured refrigerator (or one inside a locked area), holding only permitted medicines.

3. State-by-state notes

Victoria

The Victorian Pharmacy Authority recommends four Loxin or Dyna bolts of at least 10 mm × 50 mm for a solid wall, or four 10 mm coach bolts through the wall with a 3 mm steel backing plate for stud or hollow walls. The 2017 Regulations are due to expire on 16 May 2027 and are being remade.

New South Wales

From 5 November 2026 the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 was replaced. Storage now follows the NSW Health Medicine Storage Standards. As we read Part 3.4 ("any other place not specified"), medical and dental practices need a secure lockable metal or hardwood cabinet or safe, securely attached, rather than a 9 mm steel safe. Confirm with NSW Health, as licence conditions can require more.

Queensland

Queensland Health consulted on a revised storage standard in March 2026 (proposals include strong rooms and more flexible fixing rules). As at November 2026, version 2 remains the published standard.

Western Australia

WA Health's guidance says safes "cannot be bolted to stands, shelves or plinths", and that safes sold as drug safes by specialist suppliers will usually meet the requirements while those from general hardware or office stores generally will not.

South Australia

The SA Code is a self-assessment checklist: a safe must meet all minimum construction requirements (Outcome 1), be hard to remove (Outcome 2) and have a detection option (Outcome 3). Electronic access logs must be kept for at least two years.

Tasmania, ACT and Northern Territory

Tasmania sets construction by Secretary approval; contact the Pharmaceutical Services Branch before buying. In the ACT, how sections 532 and 533 apply to private-practice doctors, dentists and vets is not clear from the text; confirm with ACT Health. The NT Code of Practice dates from 2014 and is still linked as current by NT Health.

4. SCEC security containers (Australian Government)

SCEC (the Security Construction and Equipment Committee) evaluates security equipment for Australian Government use; ASIO's T4 Protective Security directorate runs the evaluations. Approved products are listed in the Security Equipment Evaluated Products List (SEEPL), which is not public.

Class	Intended use (Protective Security Policy Framework, Release 2026)	Lock
Class A	Information with an extreme or catastrophic business impact in high-risk situations. Can be extremely heavy; check floor loading.	As specified in the SEEPL listing
Class B	Extreme or catastrophic information in low-risk situations, or high or extreme information in higher-risk situations. Heavy and lighter models.	SCEC-approved combination lock
Class C	Information up to extreme business impact in low-risk situations, or medium impact in higher-risk situations.	SCEC-approved restricted keyed lock

SCEC containers are not drug or cash safes

The PSPF states SCEC-approved containers "are for storage of security classified information and resources" and "provide limited protection from a forcible attack". For Schedule 8 medicines, the state and territory rules above apply; for cash and valuables, use a burglary-rated safe. The class needed also depends on the Security Zone where the container sits. To confirm a product, ask the procuring agency, a SCEC-endorsed Security Zone Consultant or a SCEC Approved Locksmith to check the SEEPL.

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