



28 October 2021

Committee Secretary  
Education, Employment and Training Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
Via: [EETC@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:EETC@parliament.qld.gov.au)

**RE: Submission on the Inquiry into the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021**

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Queensland Branch (Guild) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Inquiry into the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021*.

**About the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and Community Pharmacy**

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia is the national peak organisation representing community pharmacies in Australia. It strives to promote and support community pharmacies as the appropriate providers of primary frontline healthcare through optimum therapeutic use of medicines, medicines management and other related services. Community pharmacies provide timely, convenient and affordable access to the quality and safe provision of medicines – most notably through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) – and other healthcare services by pharmacists who are highly skilled and qualified health professionals.

Community pharmacy is an essential and trusted part of Australia's primary healthcare system. Each year there are 458 million patient visits<sup>1</sup> (approximately 8.8 million per week) to community pharmacies making pharmacists the most visited healthcare professional in Australia.

In Queensland, there are over 1,200 community pharmacies across the state, delivering highly accessible health services including vaccinations, medicines and medication advice. The Guild represents the owners of community pharmacies in Queensland and is committed to working with other healthcare professionals, stakeholders, community organisations and Government to improve healthcare services and health infrastructure which supports all Queenslanders, including in times of crisis or disaster.

**The Community Pharmacy Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Community pharmacies have faced many pressures during the pandemic. They have sustained increased workloads and the need to rapidly adapt systems and workflows to address issues stemming from panic buying of medicines, medicine shortages, social distancing and physical

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<sup>1</sup> PBS Date of Supply, Guild Digest, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

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restriction measures, heightened infection control procedures and sourcing personal protective equipment for staff and the public.

They have experienced uncertainty with business conditions and reductions in revenue due to lockdowns, restrictions and changes in consumer behaviours.

Regardless of these stressors, community pharmacies have remained open to support their local community and provide access to vital services. Case in point is that community pharmacies in Queensland have delivered over 104,200 Astra Zeneca and over 107,400 Moderna vaccines to date.<sup>2</sup>

### **Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021**

The Guild is very supportive of the permanent establishment of a Queensland Small Business Commissioner.

Now more than ever, small business needs assistance to recover, grow and employ more staff for their businesses.

- Community pharmacies located in shopping centres and central business districts have particularly found the last two years challenging in relation to negotiating commercial leases with landlords. The Small Business Commissioner's functions of providing advisory services, dispute resolution and mediation processes is welcomed.
- The focus on advocacy on behalf of small businesses is appreciated. We particularly highlight the need to support small business with dealing with the Australian Tax Office and the associated disputes which can be a significant issue.

For example, in 2020 the mechanism for calculating GST turnover to determine eligibility for access to JobKeeper had an unfair impact on community pharmacies who supply high cost medicines (such as Hepatitis C and HIV medicines) through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for their patients. The dispensing of these high cost medicines significantly increased GST turnover but are very low margin items. These pharmacies were denied access to JobKeeper for upholding their duty of care and maintaining supply of high cost drugs to their patients.

Our members need the Small Business Commissioner to advocate on their behalf and acknowledge the unique operating environment of community pharmacies compared to other small businesses.

The Guild commends the Queensland Government on the range of economic support activities aimed at supporting industry and employers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to working with the Queensland Small Business Commissioner to further support the sustainability of community pharmacies while they recover and prosper post pandemic.

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<sup>2</sup> AIR data 26/10/2021

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Should you have any questions regarding this submission please contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Kind regards

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