



29 June 2018

To Whom It May Concern

Opposition to profit-first big businesses taking over Queensland's community pharmacies

ConNetica is an expert suicide prevention and mental health consultancy that has operated since 2007. Our team has worked closely with the Qld Pharmacy Guild and their members since 2014. We have the utmost respect for community pharmacies, having seen first-hand their contribution to the health and well-being of Australians. The purpose of this letter is to express ConNetica's grave concern about the social and economic impact of allowing profit first big businesses to operate community pharmacies. ConNetica opposes profit first big businesses providing community pharmacy services. We would urge the committee to make no recommendations for the deregulation of pharmacy ownership in Queensland in order to protect the model of community pharmacy which serves Queenslanders so well.

Community pharmacies are a part of Australia's social fabric. Everyday these pharmacies serve the public, offering cost effective, empathetic, community and client-focused primary health services and advice. Pharmacists are the second most trusted profession in Australia and this along with community pharmacies' ability to provide confidential services in safe, non-threatening and quiet environments positions them to be excellent providers of primary mental health services. These attributes result in people with a mental illness being willing to seek early health intervention services. Without community pharmacists, many people with a mental illness would not access any services until their health deteriorates significantly and they are in need of costly tertiary health services.

Many people with a mental illness are reluctant to access traditional medical and community services, however they are very comfortable to frequently visit their local community pharmacy. It is this frequency and willingness that enables community pharmacy staff to readily identify changes in customers' emotional and physical well-being. Community pharmacies have an excellent understanding of available community services and many community pharmacists are now trained in Mental Health First Aid and how to have "Conversations for life" with people who are becoming vulnerable. This knowledge and these conversations skills position community pharmacies to confidently and appropriately recommend early access to a range of social and medical services when and as needed.

In addition, given the ethos of community pharmacies to "serve their community" many of their staff are active members of their communities. As such, community pharmacy staff have the interpersonal and professional skills to readily identify those in need and to appropriately refer these individuals to services. These early interventions minimise the need for costlier secondary and tertiary health services.

A move to deregulate pharmacy ownership in Queensland threatens community pharmacies. It would lead to poorer mental health outcomes for patients and increase burdens on other services within the health sector. We must preserve the current model of community pharmacy, allowing pharmacists to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable people in their communities.

If you require any additional information to support this submission, please contact Marion Wands on [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\].au](mailto:[REDACTED]@connetica.com.au).

Yours sincerely

Marion Wands

CEO, Director ConNetica Consulting