

Health, Community and Disability Services, Domestic and Family Violence Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

**RE: Inquiry into establishing a pharmacy council and pharmacy ownership in Queensland**

05-07-2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

I recently found out about this inquiry, and I'm writing to express my concerns as the owner of a pharmacy in a rural area in Queensland.

**I am the owner of the Yarraman pharmacy in QLD since 2005.**

I understand that the government is planning to set up a pharmacy council, and I think this is a good idea. We need a local body to oversee pharmacies. But I'm really worried about what any changes to the laws around pharmacy ownership would mean for my pharmacy and my patients.

Deregulating the sector and opening it up to non-pharmacists owners could mean the end of community pharmacies like my own. Pharmacies are not like other businesses. Rural and remote communities, like the one I service in Yarraman, need the health services that a local pharmacist provides. Many of my customers struggle to get to the GP for minor ailments, and I'm there to provide health advice when this happens.

Businesses like mine are already struggling, and the offer of purchase by a large corporation might seem attractive, but we are health care providers first and foremost. I know that Coles or Woolworths wouldn't provide the sorts of services to my community that I do, because many of them simply don't turn a profit. I used to be a pharmacist in the UK 20 years ago and I worked as a locum pharmacist for a big supermarket chain. The staff turned up to work for money EVERYDAY and no one cared about 'what professional services' mean to the customers and patients. For them it was just a job, like the cashier in the supermarket! I really enjoyed being the owner of the Yarraman pharmacy in town because the local elderly people really respect our services.

I also think that the scope of services pharmacists can provide should be reviewed. I need to be able to provide more services to my community, as I really am the most accessible health professional in **Yarraman, QLD**. The services include screening for diabetics and STI etc.

Pharmacies are incredibly important to rural and remote communities in Queensland. We need to have confidence that regulations will let us continue to serve our communities as best we can. We also need to be able to meet more of the health needs of our patients, to give every rural Queenslanders a better chance at a healthier life.

The other concern I want to raise is the pharmacy ownership rules. I guessed all, or most, owners understand that ONLY pharmacist can own a pharmacy license and ONE PHARMACIST can only own not more than 5 pharmacies. Can someone explain why Ramsay health, being a corporation only, can own pharmacies? Also, how can Chemist warehouse own whatever number of pharmacies that they want? Does it mean it has turned into a game for the rich now?

Regards,

Steve HON

Owner of the Yarraman pharmacy

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