

**eczema association australasia**

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Mr Rob Hansen

Health, Community and Disability Services, Domestic and Family Violence Parliamentary Committee

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

RE: Inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland

Dear Mr Hansen

I am writing to submit the view of the Eczema Association of Australasia Inc (EAA) to the current inquiry into the pharmacy sector in Queensland.

EAA is a peak national body which aims to support and educate eczema sufferers, their carers and the wider community. We aim to greatly increase public awareness of Eczema, ensure improved treatment of sufferers, improve and broaden the availability of medical treatments and supplies for sufferers and conduct research into the causes and effects of Eczema.

We were surprised to discover that this inquiry is looking in to deregulating pharmacy ownership in Queensland. Eczema sufferers rely heavily on the services, advice and care that community pharmacists provide, so the regulation of this sector is incredibly important to our stakeholders.

We believe the current model of community pharmacy services Eczema sufferers well. We fear that a big business takeover of community pharmacies would see the services they provide to eczema patients, in screening, consultation and treatment, diminish. We believe that a pharmacy driven to deliver returns to corporate shareholders would see little value in educating its staff about eczema, or in encouraging its pharmacists to have conversations with their customers about Eczema and other health conditions.

Pharmacists are a key element of the primary healthcare system. They offer their community members with a health advice which is offered free of charge, outside regular business hours and does not require an appointment. People suffering from Eczema may not want to make an appointment with their doctor to deal with their condition, and screening from a pharmacist can be an essential step on the path to diagnosis and effective treatment. We are concerned that in a deregulated environment, the pharmacist's role as a 'first point of contact' for a range of health conditions may disappear, as corporate management seeks to minimise unprofitable activities within pharmacies.

This is a particular concern for patients in rural and remote areas, where access to other health services may be limited by distance or availability. Eczema sufferers in these areas rely on the services provided through pharmacies, and we are concerned that a corporate model may not continue to provide these services.

With regards to the scope of practice of pharmacists. The EAA would be supportive of any extension of screening of skin conditions in pharmacies. We believe that, given that pharmacies are the most visited health destination in Australia, they are best placed to screen for a range of conditions, including skin conditions. While we are supportive of the role medical doctors have to play in the diagnosis and treatment of skin conditions, we believe that screening in pharmacies could ensure that more conditions are picked up sooner, ensuring that Eczema sufferers can get help when they need it.

Pharmacies are an essential part of the health system in Australia, and one which people with skin conditions rely heavily on. The EAA does not support any change in regulation which threatens community pharmacies as we believe the current model serves our stakeholders well.

Kind Regards

Cheryl Talent, President

Eczema Association of Australasia Inc

eaa gold corporate supporters

