

From:
To: [Pharmacy](#)
Subject: RE: Inquiry into establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Qld
Date: Monday, 9 July 2018 5:24:49 PM

Committee Secretary
HCDSDFVPC
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Hansen

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

I have been made aware of the abovementioned inquiry, and I write to submit my view on issues within the terms of reference of this inquiry.

I am an owner of two Pharmacies in Brisbane's western suburbs and I work in and between these stores 5 days a week. I totally support and welcome the establishment of a Pharmacy council in Queensland as for too long I have heard about Pharmacist's flaunting the current ownership laws. Of most concern has been the roll out of large, corporate groups who appear to be controlling Pharmacies without every stepping foot inside the stores they are running and hence having zero contact with the patients who frequent these Pharmacies and the services they provide. The current ownership structure where a qualified and registered Pharmacist owns the Pharmacy and is involved in the day to day running of the business is an essential piece of the health system in Australia as Pharmacies are often the first point of contact for patients seeking health advice, referral and support. A lot of this is provided at low or no cost which provides a massive saving for taxpayers as it frees up hospital and general practitioner time. I employ approximately 25 staff across my two Pharmacies and provide many free services to my local community such as free delivery (5 days a week to patients who would otherwise go without as they are homebound), subsidised medication packing (to improve patient adherence), free diabetes and blood pressure screening, free medication advice, free shop accounts for those who struggle to afford their medications etc. I believe the Queensland government is looking into the laws governing pharmacy ownership with the possibility of Pharmacy deregulation as part of setting up a Pharmacy council. I cannot emphasise enough how catastrophic this would be to the health of all Queenslanders! There is no way that big corporations answering to shareholders will provide the same level of patient centred care that the current system offers. There is no way that big corporations answering to shareholders will work with government (as the current Pharmacy owners do) to reduce the PBS burden on taxpayers. There is no way that big corporations answering to shareholders will provide services that don't generate a profit. There is no way that big corporations answering to shareholders will employ excess staff to ensure that patients are able to talk to expert, qualified health professionals any time of the day the Pharmacy is open (which is generally outside of core trading hours). Currently we have two basic Pharmacy models in Australia, the traditional, patient centred model and the big box discount model. Whilst both operate under the current ownership laws, I don't believe they both provide equal health benefits and whilst not all patients choose to utilise these health benefits offered by the traditional Pharmacy model, by

deregulating ownership we would see the closure of many of these patient centred traditional Pharmacies that play such an important part in the health and lives of Queenslanders. Patients should not be denied the right to choose between the two models and any rushed decisions relating to Pharmacy ownership rules by the committee could result in this. Do we want competition in our Industry? Absolutely! But by changing the ownership rules in Queensland and the potential flow on effect to the other states, we could go from a few thousand Pharmacist owners to perhaps one or two big corporately owned companies controlling the industry. Will they have the patients health and well being as their first priority or will it be the bottom line profits for their shareholders? What products would they stock for patients? Just the top 20% which are profitable or the entire PBS range as we currently do? Patients need and deserve choice when it comes to managing their health and doctors need to be able to ensure patients can easily access medicines they prescribe, not just the ones that make the dispenser a nice profit. An example of this I experienced last year was where a 'Big Box Pharmacy' up the road phoned me to see if I would dispense Zepatier (cost price \$21 148, profit \$79) because their owner in NSW told them they couldn't dispense this medication due to the low profit margin. Of course I did dispense it, but without choice, this patient may have had to go without. This illustrates that the current system of ownership is not perfect but I believe it is a hell of a lot better that it would be should deregulation occur. I urge you to consider my opinions and advice and that of my colleagues and patients who make submissions before you or the committee make any rushed decisions. Please feel free to call or email me for discussion or clarification any time.

Regards

Peter Kolb
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Middle Park