

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

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 own and practice from a small community pharmacy in the rural and remote town of Wandoan in Queensland, 500Km from Brisbane. The pharmacy is open for more than 40 hours each week and I employ one staff. A doctor visits the government run Wandoan Primary Health Centre twice a week where a registered nurse is in attendance five days a week. In this environment the pharmacy plays a very important role in providing health care for the community.

I understand that the government is planning to set up a pharmacy council. I'm not sure what its role will be and 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 Wandoan, 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.

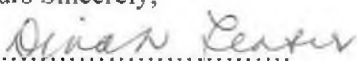
My business is already under serious attack from the large businesses in the big centres that are aggressively discounting their products and dispensing. I cannot possibly compete with the prices they offer. Any further destructive initiatives such as deregulation of ownership will result in my business being unviable. The health services I offer at the pharmacy include Blister Packs, Blood Pressure monitoring, Immunisation, and medication reviews. I regularly phone doctors and allied health personnel on the patient's behalf to discuss medication issues.

Businesses like mine are already struggling, 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 these simply don't turn a profit.

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 Wandoan. These services include screening for cholesterol levels and diabetes. As the doctor visits Wandoan only two days a week, I feel it is essential that the G.P's employed by Queensland Health provide a telehealth-ecscript service on the other 3 days a week. At present for patients including mothers with young children and the elderly it is a 120Km round trip to see the doctor on those days.

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.

Yours Sincerely,


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Dinah Fraser B. Pharm., MPS. The Wandoan Pharmacy, 36 Royds Street, Wandoan 4419