

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 am the owner of a Queensland community pharmacy, Galleon Way Pharmacy, in Currumbin Waters. I am writing to inform the committee of my views as a community pharmacist on the current inquiry into pharmacy.

Community pharmacy is the most accessible part of the healthcare system. There is no appointment required to see a pharmacist and we are very knowledgeable with a vast knowledge of medications, natural medicines and a thorough knowledge of the six national health priority areas including cardiovascular, cancer, injury, mental health and asthma. Our role in the community is to help reduce the burden of these health areas and help members of the community stay out of hospital.

I believe pharmacists are undervalued by the health sector. We have completed four years of an intense university degree and one year under a pharmacist to gain registration – which is the same amount of time to become a dentist and even longer than the study time for nurses. We require at least 40 CPD points per year to remain registered. We are highly capable of more roles than we are currently allowed to do.

For instance, we do health checks to determine whether a patient needs to see a GP (e.g. blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol checking). We help people lose weight to reduce, not only their cardiovascular risk, but pain in their knees, hips, etc. We advise asthmatics that spacers make inhalers more effective. We give lifestyle tips as well as advice on side effects, drug interactions and how to take medicines. I could go on forever. We listen, and we genuinely care about our patients.

Pharmacists need to be in control of ownership of pharmacies, otherwise these values shared by pharmacy owners will be lost and profits will be the sole concern. I believe that the Aussie looking for quality healthcare from their local pharmacy will be the real loser.

I believe deregulation of our industry would lead to big companies monopolising the industry and significantly raising the prices of medicines. Ownership restrictions need to be enforced to prevent companies with bigger buying power and to ensure young, promising pharmacists still have access to the ownership market.

I understand that it is not currently necessary for a doctor's surgery to be owned by a doctor, but I believe doctors receive 60 to 70 percent of the revenue they generate for a surgery. This puts doctors in a very different position to pharmacists.

We need a Queensland Pharmacy Council to ensure pharmacy remains in the hands of pharmacists and to ensure practice remains patient focused. Queensland is the only state not to have this in place. It is vital in any health industry that professional practice standards are maintained and regulated, and health practitioners are reprimanded if found guilty of malpractice.

Also, it is vital the current ownership and location laws are adhered to protect the public from illegal ownership and practices. It is imperative that Queensland follows suit with every other state and territory to ensure current ownership laws, location rules and monitoring of pharmacies is upheld.

Minimum staff training is also vital to ensure the safety of the public. A minimum of level three pharmacy assistant training is ideal to ensure staff have the knowledge to safely serve the public when selling vitamins and OTC products. Pharmacy students need to pass S2/S3 training.

Dispensary guidelines should be followed as well to ensure safe dispensing. One pharmacist for every 200 scripts dispensed should be implemented no matter how many dispense techs are employed due to necessary checking procedures. This can also be policed by the Pharmacy Council.

Moreover, the scope of pharmacists should be increased to reflect our knowledge and skill set. We can currently give flu shots and whooping cough vaccinations for those over 18. I believe that in the interests of the public, pharmacists should be granted access to the NIP for administering flu vaccines. They are the best preventative for the flu and we are trained to give them. We should be able to give these sorts of vaccines to patients as young as 12.

We should have the power to go to a workplace and administer vaccines also. We should have the authority to give a one-month supply of ongoing vital medicine (e.g. blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol) due to increased waiting times to see GPs. Not to mention the ability to prescribe short-term courses of antibiotics for simple ailments such as UTIs.

Additionally, I understand that private hospitals currently give a supply of medicine to patients each time they are admitted to hospital, even when the patient provides their own. This should be stopped, as it is leading to unnecessary stockpiling of medicines.

Competition is important in any industry, and it keeps businesses honest. I believe ethical prices charged by pharmacists should be the same in every pharmacy, no matter where you go, and the mark up is set by the government. This is fair for the consumer and fair for the pharmacy. Sure, front shop prices will vary based on a store's buying power and stores may also vary in the services given based on patient demographic.

The cut of the price of general medicines is getting too high at \$39.50. For example, some patients who have asthma are becoming less compliant on their preventer and are using Ventolin instead. This is increasing the risk of hospitalisation because of increased inflammation in the airways. Either the cap should be reduced, or we need the help of private health funds to get the price down. Price disclosure is a great mechanism that has been introduced to control PBS spending. This has minimised the need for discounters.

In conclusion, please carefully consider all points discussed in my submission. Please do not undervalue our role in the community. We need to ensure pharmacies stay in pharmacists' hands, as we have the health of all Queenslanders at the forefront.

Regards,

David Lund

Owner, Galleon Way Pharmacy