



**cate'schemist**  
*Caring for you...*

PO Box 3247  
HERMIT PARK QLD 4812  
ACN 616 990 973 ABN 77 616 990 973

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 write to submit my views on issues within the terms of reference of this inquiry. As an owner of a community pharmacy, I am concerned about what a big business takeover of community pharmacies in Queensland would mean for my patients.

I don't believe Australians want to see supermarkets, pharmaceutical companies, and other big corporates owning pharmacies. Our health is not their concern. By pharmacists owning pharmacies the public has the added protection of the pharmacist having the professional responsibility of your health as their focus. Queensland regulation prevents positions of 'moral hazard' where corporate priorities override patient, health, social and community outcomes. The moral hazard is evidenced by recent inquiries into the banking sector; and repetitively by examples such as HIH, Seven Eleven, VW and Storm Financial. It is further evidenced by the recent [Sydney Morning Herald article](#) where (deregulated) clinics and practices favour high volume profitable patients over high need, high maintenance and low profit. Everyone acknowledges that supermarkets, with their selling of cigarettes and alcohol should automatically rule them out of owning pharmacies. Doctor and medical corporates should also not be allowed to own pharmacies and thus profit from the more medicines they prescribe. Equally drug manufacturers should not own pharmacies. The list goes on and on and unintended consequences would result.

The moral risk is not mitigated by a system of pharmacy boards, associations, codes of conduct, professional initial and continuation training, and (soon) a Pharmacy Council.

Deregulation will result in the closure of local pharmacies. This is absolutely certain based on overseas experience, and patient care will suffer. I know the Return on Investment of my pharmacy is not attractive from a conventional business perspective, but my market share is. We know from historical example in other sectors in Australia, and in deregulated pharmacy sectors overseas, what the corporate strategy will be. A site with attractive market share is either priced out of the market into administration or purchased so the site can be closed. Neither outcome supports my community. This is not a conspiracy theory.

These outcomes are evidenced by history and are what trainee corporate executives are taught to do in Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Commerce and MBA. It is an outcome encouraged in sectors where disruption is synonymous with innovation and consumer benefit; but our health systems should not be disrupted. Our health systems should be protected. Protecting community and social interests from profit motive is one of the core moral duties of government, and the purpose of regulation.

My pharmacists are the focal point for basic health care needs in many communities, operating as the first point of call and providing triage, advice, referral and support services to patients. In many rural and regional communities like Townsville, a pharmacist's role as a first point of contact is even more significant, with access to other health services restricted by distance and availability. My team are accessible, usually without an appointment, and primarily advice is provided without charge. I often make business decisions contrary to profit motive to ensure equitable access is maintained. Especially after hours, 7-day trading, where I run at a loss for the community.

Deregulation threatens pharmacies and will result in the closure of pharmacies in rural and remote areas, eliminating a vital service for these communities. Access to the most accessible health professional, the pharmacist, would disappear.

The history of the location rules is a useful example. It is a much better position for a government to be able to shape the sector by closing pharmacies or restricting approvals. It is unlikely the reverse would be possible if too many closed. The government is not going to be able to direct Ramsay or Woolworths to open a pharmacy in a community centre (to replace the one they bought and closed).

Deregulation would bring many unintended consequences in a complex national system. Government regulation should be strengthened to align with best practice in other states.

I request that the committee support the important role of pharmacist owners and recommend against deregulation.

Sincerely



**Eliese Lloyd**

Owner

Cate's Chemist Hyde Park

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