

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.

Bamaga Pharmacy

I understand that the government is planning to set up a pharmacy council, and I think this is a good idea. We need a local body to oversee pharmacies. But 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 at Bamaga in NPA region, 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.

We are a new pharmacy that has not been in the community for very long. Prior to opening there was a vast expanse of Northern Queensland who had no access to a community pharmacy and their only access to medication was through a hospital or health center, imagine having to wait 4-5 hours for Panadol for your child. Our pharmacy has allowed the community to experience all the amazing benefits a community pharmacy can offer. For the first time the residents have been able to speak to someone when is coinvent for them one on one about their medication, the health of their child, their own health. Being so remote we must deal with a lot of logistical matters, medications tend to take a lot longer to arrive than what would be considered acceptable any where else, but we need to be able to manage those issues and still give this community an amazing level of care. We aim to provide consistent staffing as making a connection to your health care providers is always going to give you a better outcome, an in small towns having someone who is from the region is always going to be of benefit especially when the service we are providing is new.

Businesses like mine are already struggling, and the offer of purchase by a large corporation might seem attractive, 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 them 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 Bamaga and the NPA region.

A huge step forward for us has a lot to do not only with the funding and support for programs offered in pharmacy but also for programs that can be provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. What we would love to see more funding for is:

- Lung health screening

- Diabetes screening (further to medcheck, but more in a diagnostic setting)
- STI screening
- Wound care services
- Pharmacist payment for providing vaccinations
- Sleep apnea subsidies
- Continence aids services
- Funding for weight management programs .

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.

Regards,

Carli Berrill

Managing Partner

Bamaga Pharmacy