



Clifford Gardens
Cnr James St and Anzac Ave
Toowoomba Q 4350
Ph 07 46346845 Fax 07 46 334121

Email: cliffordgardens@terrywhitechemmart.com.au

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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'm writing to express my concerns as the owner of a community pharmacy in Toowoomba based in a regional shopping Centre servicing the pharmaceutical needs of a broad spectrum of the local community and the greater Darling Downs region.

I believe 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-pharmacist owners could mean the end of community pharmacies like my own. Pharmacies are not like other businesses. Rural based communities, like the one I service on the Darling Downs, need the health services that a local pharmacist provides. Many of my customers struggle to get to the GP for minor ailments, Medication advice is frequently required and we care for 150 community-based patients who require Medication packs weekly, many require Home delivery (at no charge) and rely on us to continue to live independently at home. We open seven days a week for convenience to our customers and their medical needs.

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 Toowoomba. Patients can walk in any-time and have free professional advice and obtain a variety of health services Seven days a week. We need to be able to expand these services on offer like minor wound treatments, Vaccination services, Child health assessments, Diabetes education and prevention services, Weight loss clinics, Public health promotion of disease state prevention and management, These are all NON profit services that are essential in our community and up till now have been funded by existing pharmacies, These services need to be expanded and the community health benefits capitalised on while the opportunity exists. This will not happen in a deregulated environment where economics is the sole driver.

Health care particularly prevention is not Free.

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 Queenslanders a better chance at a healthier life.

Yours Sincerely

Alwyn Baumann B.Pharm