

12th July 2018

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 I am writing to submit my views on issues within the terms of reference of this inquiry.

I have worked in community pharmacy since 2000. In that time I have worked as a pharmacy assistant, dispensary assistant, pre-registration pharmacy and registered pharmacist. During those 18 years I have seen many changes but what has not changed is the focus of Pharmacists and Pharmacy Assistants to improve patient health and to more often than not act as the first port of call for patients with health concerns. Patients can access the Pharmacist, in our local community pharmacy, without an appointment and usually free of charge regarding any of their health concerns.

I am concerned about the possibility of big business takeover of community pharmacies in Queensland as the warning signs are already present in the form of corporate ownership structures that bypass the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001 (QLD). These warning signs include reduced patient access to the pharmacist, reduced working conditions and pay for pharmacists. Big business with a focus only for bottom line profit would see pharmacists put under more pressure with respect to prescription volume in addition to downward pressure on wages. This would result in more pharmacists leaving the industry, in addition to the already reduced numbers of newly registered pharmacists. There has already been a significant reduction in the entry requirements of pharmacy and further crippling of the profession through big business ownership would further drive potential pharmacists away from the industry and just perpetuate the issue.

I know firsthand the important contribution that pharmacists make to their local communities, and I believe that any deregulation of the laws around the ownership of these pharmacies could cause these pharmacies to be bought out or simply forced to shut their doors to the detriment of public health. The current system with a pharmacy owner who has health outcomes as their business priority backed by their professional ethics and priorities must be better for patient and public health outcomes. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is too important a piece of public health policy to leave in the hands of corporates. Deregulation would bring many unintended consequences and scenarios. I believe

deregulation would threaten the jobs of many pharmacists and destroy its potential as a job in the future. I believe deregulation will increase the healthcare burden on GPs and the public hospital system.

While I understand there are other matters before the inquiry, our main concern is ensuring that community pharmacies continue to be able to support their communities.

I request that the committee consider the important role of pharmacies and recommend against deregulation.

Kind Regards,

Ryan Pratten

B. Pharm