



Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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**HEALTH, COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.00 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee report No. 12 titled *Inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland* tabled on 16 October 2018.

Today I am pleased to speak on the 2018 pharmacy inquiry, which was a considerable and significant body of work conducted by our committee. It looked specifically into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland. As chair of the committee, from the start I must thank our entire committee, the secretariat, including Mr Rod Bogaards, all individual submitters and pharmacy related organisations that attended and gave evidence at the various public inquiries we held in Queensland.

The inquiry terms of reference also allowed us to consider pharmacy ownership regulation and opportunities to extend the scope of practice for the state's pharmacists and pharmacy assistants. In particular, I want to acknowledge and thank the 210 submitters to the inquiry and others from the health sector who shared their passion for and knowledge and experience of their roles in helping provide health care in Queensland. I also commend the many community pharmacists who serve their local communities every day in the state's regional and rural areas and those who participated in our inquiry like Lucy Walker from Terry White Goondiwindi, who travelled to give evidence at our Toowoomba hearing, and Cate Whalan from Townsville's Cate's Chemist.

In May 2018 our health committee was tasked with inquiring into the establishment of a pharmacy council and the transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland. For that inquiry we published a detailed issues paper from which we received those submissions and held five public hearings in Toowoomba, Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane to examine the issues raised by submitters. We met with representatives from the Victorian Pharmacy Authority in Melbourne and sought expert advice from the Department of Health.

Our committee's inquiry focused on some key issues: the benefits of extending the scope of practice for pharmacists and pharmacy assistants; the administration of transfers of pharmacy ownership via the Department of Health; and the merits of establishing a separate statutory authority such as a pharmacy council to administer transfers in pharmacy ownership. We gained valuable information from organisations such as the Pharmacy Board of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the Australian Pharmaceutical Society, the Australian Medical Association and other medical groups such as Professor Lisa Nissen, head of the School of Clinical Sciences at QUT.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the considerable work and assistance provided by the Auditor-General, Mr Brendan Worrall, and his team at the Queensland Audit Office who reviewed pharmacy business transfers and ownership in Queensland over the last two years and whose audit report resulted in a number of recommendations for the Department of Health. I also want to thank the

Queensland Productivity Commission for its excellent work in reviewing the costs and benefits of establishing a statutory pharmacy authority in Queensland to take over responsibility for administering the provisions of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001 from the department. The committee has noted the commission's findings and has recommended not to proceed with a statutory authority. However, given other issues discussed during our inquiry, we saw merit in establishing a pharmacy advisory council to provide advice on pharmacy issues to government and at no cost to the Queensland taxpayer.

I thank my fellow committee members for their genuine interest and enthusiasm and the truly bipartisan approach they adopted for this work, mindful of the significant role pharmacists and pharmacist assistants play in delivering health care in Queensland. Our government believes in affordable health care for all Queenslanders. Having a strong and efficient retail pharmacy industry with pharmacists who are highly professional is absolutely critical. Pharmacists are integral to our healthcare system. We see potential for pharmacists to do more than they currently do, with some prescribing of medications in low-risk situations, subject to a range of safeguards.

The committee framed some 11 recommendations and I will not go through them all, but in the time I have left we recommended that the Department of Health lower the minimum patient age requirement for pharmacists administering vaccinations to 16 years of age in recommendation 1. Recommendation 2 recommended that the Department of Health develop options to provide low-risk emergency and repeat prescriptions—for example, the contraceptive pill and low-risk vaccinations—through pharmacies, subject to a risk minimisation framework. The framework could include consultation with GPs using 13HEALTH. It is a considerable report and body of work.