




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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PHARMACY BUSINESS OWNERSHIP BILL

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.23 pm): It is a privilege to rise to speak on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023, which has been some time coming. In fact, as we have all heard, the bill originated in 2018, a report was written, the government responded in 2019 and supported the recommendations and then there was another review. I suggest that perhaps the delay in bringing the bill forward is a further example of the government not having the right priorities. I appreciate the contributions of the shadow minister for health, Ros Bates, and the member for Moggill, a former president of the AMAQ and a former president of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland. Rural doctors and rural health services are subjects very dear to my heart.

I pay tribute to all of the pharmacies in our regional communities for the primary health care that they provide. I grew up and spent much of my professional life in the Gatton community. You cannot talk about Gatton and pharmacies without mentioning the name Val Vaughan. Val is still a contributor to our community. She has won many awards in our local community. Over decades, Val Vaughan and her trusted team have provided absolutely wonderful care and advice—life coaching, some might say—to people in need. They are absolutely essential primary healthcare providers. Val moved on to set up partnerships with Alex Hood and David Cullen. In fact, right in the main street of Gatton, David and Eloise Cullen are still providing health services. I love to drop in and say g'day.

It is not just the pharmacist who is key to the business. I recognise, from the Pharmacy Guild, Chris and his team who are in the gallery today. With respect to Chris and his team, it is not only the pharmacists who are key. The men and ladies who make up the front-of-house staff do a wonderful job. I cannot help but mention Leanne Lentz. Everybody in Laidley would know Leanne Lentz. She has been in the pharmacy for many decades. She is a wonderful and trusted person. She is always helpful and provides guidance to those with the youngest of babies as well as those who are a little older.

Pharmacies provide an example of great leadership in our community. As has been said today, pharmacies are wonderful small businesses. Quite often they are family businesses that pass from generation to generation and such is the case with David and Eloise Cullen's pharmacy. Pharmacists provide really dependable advice to families in need. I could not put a number on how many disadvantaged people have been helped by pharmacies and others in our community.

It is great to see our youngsters going off to study. Regularly people say to me that we need to keep our brightest and best in our community whether that is Gatton, Laidley, Lowood, Fernvale or any of the other smaller towns. I tell them that the best thing we can do is to make sure that our brightest and best go off to learn and study and understand a bigger part of the world. One of those aspects is pharmacy. We would like to see our students go out, do their studies and pass their university qualifications. Then they can come back and carry on a family business or set up another business and raise their family in our community because that will keep our community vibrant.

We have pharmacies right across the Lockyer community from Fernvale, Lowood, Plainland, Laidley and Gatton up to Withcott. Some of those people are absolutely wonderful stalwarts who volunteer in many other organisations such as service clubs and the chambers of commerce. I think of Laidley where Tina Wong and Chris Tam ran a pharmacy for many years. A few years ago that pharmacy changed ownership when Matthew McLean bought it. Matthew and his family are wonderful contributors to the Laidley community. Pharmacies and other small businesses like them form the backbone for our communities. They are a really dependable set of ears and provide leadership so that our communities continue on the right path.

Some people raised concerns about the anti-competitive nature of the bill. If the council charged with responsibility in this area is managing it appropriately, we want to see that review to make sure those controls and the anti-competitive nature of the provisions are not being abused. We recognise the contribution that pharmacies make to their own destination. We want to ensure these small businesses in our communities have an assurance that they will not be taken over by multinationals. I think we have the balance right, but we look forward to ensuring the government and the council do the right thing by us.

As we get a little bit more experienced in life, health becomes an even greater part of it—whether it be seeing a doctor or specialist or going to the hospital. Ensuring we have better primary health care through our pharmacies is vital for us to protect. I note that most stakeholders were very supportive of the bill, to which there were originally over 200 submitters. This further exemplifies to me that this government has its priorities wrong—it has been in chaos and crisis for some time—by, for example, making changes to the name of Lady Cilento hospital as opposed to passing this bill which has been sought after by many. I think Queenslanders have stopped listening to this government because it does not have its priorities right. We on this side of the House have been listening to Queenslanders—last weekend Queenslanders sent a message to the government—and we will continue to listen to their concerns.

I stress the importance of youngsters in our communities considering pharmacy as a really wonderful career option. They should go and learn, study and get their degrees, then come back to our communities and contribute to the further development of primary health care in our communities. Our regional communities are richer for that. I thank all of the pharmacists. I note that Thursday is Thank Your Pharmacist Day. I encourage members to have a chat to each of the pharmacists in their local communities and thank them for the wonderful job they do. When I get the opportunity, I certainly will be dropping in and seeing mine.