




Speech By
Jimmy Sullivan

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Record of Proceedings, 19 March 2024

PHARMACY BUSINESS OWNERSHIP BILL

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. I am proud to be part of a government that is implementing appropriate and sensible ownership restrictions in the pharmacy space. The Miles government is committed to supporting Queensland community pharmacies. Local community pharmacies are a crucial part of our healthcare system. They play a vital role in safeguarding health and wellbeing across the community. I know that as a dad and I know that as a public servant.

This bill gives effect to recommendation 9 of the 2018 parliamentary committee report that recommended that pharmacy businesses in Queensland remain under the ownership of pharmacists or pharmacist controlled corporations. Of course, this means maintaining the 'community' at the core of 'community pharmacies'. This limitation ensures that Queensland pharmacies can primarily focus on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders in my community and the communities across Queensland that they serve.

In terms of my community pharmacies, I give a particular shout-out to Roy and Barb Packer at SuperPharmacyPlus in Stafford. They not only provide a range of really important health and wellbeing services that one would expect at a community pharmacist, but also are an NDIS registered provider and specialise in the supply of equipment for disability support and elderly support right across Brisbane. They do a fantastic job of supporting the most vulnerable in our community and they do so as proud community pharmacists. With pharmacies also at the Rode Road shops in Chermiside West and at Kedron, Stafford Heights, Stafford and Chermiside, our community is well serviced by community pharmacists whose hearts are in the right place and who do a great job for our parents, our families and our kids.

Community pharmacists really stepped up during the COVID pandemic. They proved to be crucial not only in providing vaccinations but also in messaging, leading the community in discussions and in service delivery, particularly when it was hard to get in to see a GP. They step up each year when it comes to flu season. It is one thing to send a message but their service delivery is also crucial. Queensland would not be the safe and sound community that it is without the crucial role that they play.

Speaking of flu and COVID shots, I try to support local pharmacies when I get my flu shot. I try to post about it and encourage other people to do the same, particularly as we come towards the middle part of the year. I have said before that, while it is not my motivation for going into public life, I have realised that one of the added bonuses of this job is the ability it gives me to embarrass my children. Every year I post a shot of me getting a jab in the arm or, as one of our children describes it, getting my noodle arms out. I particularly enjoy it when they come home from school saying, 'Mum, have you seen what he's done again?' It is great and it is all for a good cause.

I have had quite a lot to do with community pharmacists in different roles. Being the community minded people they are, often they take on serious roles in local school P&Cs and other community organisations so I get a lot of feedback from those people as well. As I have said, that should not be surprising considering the community focus and dedication to others that they demonstrate in their professional lives as well as their personal lives. I thank them all.

This bill makes sure that patient safety is protected. Our incredible pharmacists are tasked with dispensing medications that can significantly affect the health of Queenslanders, for better or for worse. We want to ensure that we give that power to people we can trust. We know that ownership restrictions ensure that only an appropriately qualified person who has professional and ethical standards is associated with the pharmacy profession as those people have oversight and control of the pharmacy business and the frontline health services that they provide.

Some submitters to the 2018 committee process expressed the view that an owner who is not a pharmacist would be more likely to look just at the dollars and cents and place profit before patient welfare, meaning decreased patient safety and a lowering of health standards. That is why the bill retains existing limits on how many pharmacy businesses a person may own. A pharmacist or pharmacist controlled corporation may own a maximum of five pharmacy businesses and the Mater and permitted friendly societies may own a maximum of six pharmacy businesses. This bill will ensure that all communities, no matter whether in the beautiful electorate of Stafford or elsewhere across Queensland, are offered health services that extend far beyond simply filling in a prescription.

I associate myself with the contributions of the members for Logan and Macalister who both made the point that sensitive and direct conversations may need to be had with pharmacists, whether for yourself, your parents or your children, for better or for worse, and that the middle of a Coles or Woolworths supermarket is not an appropriate setting to have such a conversation. I associate myself with the logic that they set out in terms of what this legislation will deliver.

I thank the committee, especially the chair and member for Logan. Obviously, a lot of detailed consideration has gone into the report and that is reflected in the legislation, which will provide really good outcomes. Like many members, I have had professional discussions with the guild, both on the ground and centrally, because they do want to reach out and engage with members of parliament about important issues that face their members and the members of our communities whom they serve. I thank them for their genuine and cooperative interactions. I thank the submitters and the witnesses for their involvement throughout the process, as well as the department. I look forward to seeing the implementation of this important reform and I commend the bill to the House.