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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

## TGA approval

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved the registration of dual immunotherapy using nivolumab in combination with ipilimumab with two cycles of platinum-doublet chemotherapy for first line non-small cell lung cancer.

## Take a break

HOTEL group Accor and the LocumCo are offering pharmacists the opportunity to take a well earned break, after spending months on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis.

Accor is offering health workers "exclusive staff rates" at any of its properties across the country as a "thank you" for the vital contribution they've made to their communities.

The offer is also open to emergency services workers.

**CLICK HERE** to book.

# Access the No.1 meds safety issue

STATE MPs in Queensland are being urged to actively lobby their Federal peers to secure an extension of Continued Dispensing beyond 30 Sep.

Speaking at a Queensland Health, Communities Disability Services and Family Violence Prevention Committee hearing as part of the Inquiry into the Queensland Government's health response to COVID-19, on Mon, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National Vice President, Trent Twomey, stressed the need for emergency dispensing measures to be implemented on a permanent basis.

"The number one medication safety issue is people actually running out of the medicine, because of unnecessary redtape," he said.

"This is not pharmacist prescribing... this is about pharmacists keeping Queenslanders on the medication that their prescriber has intended.

"Now whether it be in a first wave, a second wave, or whether it be indeed not in the pandemic situation, Queenslanders run out of their medication every week.

"In fact the Continued Dispensing arrangements, which

have been expanded by the Commonwealth and enabled by the Queensland Government, saved 75,000 emergency department presentations and GP presentations between the months of Apr and May this year alone.

"That is a nationwide figure.

"It has zero cost to the taxpayer.

"So what we would ask is that the Queensland Government call on the Commonwealth, because this is a Commonwealth initiative, to ensure that that particular mechanism does not expire on 30 Sep as it is currently scheduled to.

"This is something that you can do," he told the hearing.

"It will cost you nothing, but puts the pressure back on the Commonwealth Government to ensure that Queenslanders will be able to receive their medication when they run out, from their local community pharmacy."

Twomey's message was supported by delegates from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Queensland Branch, with President, Shane MacDonald, highlighting the need for emergency dispensing mechanisms to support patients during personal crisis.

The Townsville-based pharmacist



told the Committee that prior to the introduction of emergency dispensing measures he was not able to appropriately support patients who had come from other parts of Far North Queensland, and needed access to vital medicines.

"I had a patient [from Mackay] come into my pharmacy whose husband had been transported to Townsville Hospital, and the patient had run out of the blood pressure medication," he said.

"All I was able to do during that time as it was pre-COVID, was give a three-day emergency supply, which is not beneficial to this particular patient being 3/400km away from home."

MacDonald said had Continued Dispensing been enforced, he would have been able to provide a full supply of the medication, while the patient was going through a personal emergency.





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## Dispensary Corner

**AUSTRALIAN** researchers could begin tracking COVID-19 in the sewage of aircraft and cruise ships, according to a new paper published in *Journal of Travel Medicine*.

The report claims testing of wastewater from arriving vessels detected genetic fragments of the COVID-19 virus, with researchers from the University of Queensland and Australia's national science agency Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation working with transport companies to test onboard wastewater from lavatories.

"Our science and research communities are among our greatest assets in our efforts to not only overcome this pandemic, but also to assist in the economic recovery from COVID-19," said Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews.

"The ability to test wastewater from planes and cruise ships is another piece of the puzzle as we look to the future of travel and keeping Australians safe."

The paper's co-author Professor Jochen Mueller from the University of Queensland's Queensland Alliance for Environmental Health Sciences said the research could help as governments and transport industries develop plans to minimise transmission associated with resuming international travel.

The research is without doubt noble, but as far as actually doing the job goes...we're happy to leave it to someone else.

## Pharmacists feel forgotten in COVID

**DESPITE** ensuring continued access to vital medications throughout the COVID-19 crisis, pharmacists feel they have been forgotten by State, Territory and Federal Governments, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) believes.

In a submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Government's response to COVID-19, the PSA said pharmacists were "neglected by legislators" as they faced serious challenges.

PSA National President, Dr Chris Freeman, noted pharmacies and pharmacy employees had made a significant contribution to supporting the community throughout the pandemic.

"Pharmacists and their staff feel forgotten by State and Federal Governments during this pandemic," he said.

"Community pharmacists remained open throughout the entire pandemic to deliver health care and meet the needs of patients, carers and the public.

"It is disappointing that pharmacists were not always fully consulted when policy and implementation decisions were being made, including those



affecting the pharmacy profession. "There were even cases when the law had to be circumvented in order to provide the care expected by patients due to disparities between State and Federal legislation.

"It is necessary to raise concerns and provide recommendations to ensure the Government is prepared for a potential second wave of COVID-19 as well as future public health emergencies."

The submission included 17 recommendations including the introduction of legislation to protect pharmacy staff and other healthcare providers from physical violence and verbal abuse, which many have been subjected to in recent months.

The PSA called for a review of the current Serious Shortage Medicine Substitution Notice with a view to allowing pharmacists to supply an alternative medicine in response to supply issues.

The Society also advised the committee to ensure provisions be put in place to cease the issuing of prescriptions with directions to dispense multiple repeats at the one time, and for the Australian Government to provide adequate and ongoing quantities of personal protective equipment for use by pharmacists and pharmacy staff, "recognising their critical public health role".

**CLICK HERE** to access the full submission.

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### WISE Use survey

**PHARMACISTS**, interns and students are being invited to take part in the Pharmacists WISE Use survey, as part of a study to understand what information sources are being used across the profession.

The survey is being conducted by the School of Allied Health at the University of Western Australia.

Take part in the survey **HERE**.