

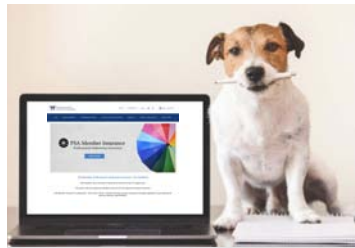


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## COVAX plan is failing

**DELAYS** in approving community pharmacies as COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) sites are failing Australians, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Western Australian Branch President, Andrew Ngeow, believes.

With Perth going into lockdown over the weekend, Ngeow voiced criticism of the Federal Government's COVAX rollout, noting that National Cabinet meetings had focused on yet to be established mass vaccination centres, while ignoring the role the existing community pharmacy network can play.

Ngeow added that pharmacists were trained and ready to join the COVAX campaign immediately, to support an accelerated rollout alongside GPs and nurses.

"We are baffled by the dismissive attitude to use of community pharmacy and dismayed by the slow and bureaucratic approach to the vaccine roll-out, which has plunged the Anzac Day plans of all Western Australians into disarray and put the safety of West Australians at risk," he said.

"Isolation quarantine, whilst necessary, is only a part of the solution.

"The real and much larger priority

for Western Australians is in their access to vaccination.

"We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to expedite its plans and ensure that community pharmacy is immediately brought on board to enable this."

Ngeow noted that the WA Government has been "extremely supportive of the involvement of community pharmacy", but the Federal Government needed to give the green light for vaccines to be distributed to pharmacies.

"It is befuddling that there is any resistance to accessing this resource," he said.

"There are supplies of the COVAX in WA which could be administered through community pharmacy right now.

"There is simply no good reason not to immediately allow this to happen, [there will] only be more disruptions, costs and negative health outcomes should this not occur."

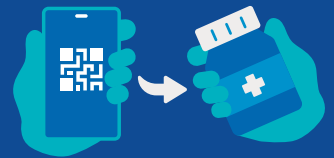
### Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news.

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## Pharmacies need COVAX clarity

**MOVES** to accelerate the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations (COVAX) through community pharmacies in rural and remote areas are being welcomed by the profession.

However, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, said the sector needed greater clarity on what National Cabinet's decision to defer the broader role of community pharmacies in the national COVAX campaign means.

Twomey noted that National Cabinet had stipulated that State and Territory governments can decide how they want to incorporate pharmacies in rural and remote areas into their vaccine campaigns, to boost uptake immediately.

"For Australians living in regional communities and the outback, 65 per cent of people are within 2.5km of a pharmacy," he said.

"For those whose home is a plane flight to the nearest hospital, for

those living in small rural towns and in remote communities, the answer for State and Territory governments to keep people healthy is the network of local community pharmacies right across the country.

"All pharmacies identified under the rural, remote and very remote categories are now an option for the States and Territories to turn on in the recalibrated rollout.

"Using these pharmacies will help to ensure that communities in these areas are not disadvantaged by any focus on mass vaccination sites in metropolitan areas."

While welcoming the decision to allow rural and remote pharmacies to join the rollout campaign, Twomey voiced concern about the move to defer the broader use of pharmacies as immunisation sites.

"There is no timeline attached to the deferral, so we need to know if it means the full rollout is deferred until vaccine stocks are available



or if the deferral is based on other criteria," he said.

"We have a network of more than 5,900 pharmacies across the country and we are ready to go.

"We have done the same training as doctors and nurse immunisers and we have the added benefit of more than half of these pharmacies being open extended hours and often at weekends.

"Some pharmacies are even open 24 hours a day.

"Clearly if you want community immunity then access is a huge factor and no healthcare professionals are more accessible than community pharmacists."

## Fred launches My Script List

**FRED** IT Group has launched its Department of Health conformant Active Script List (ASL), My Script List.

The platform was used in Tasmania for the first time last week, with the company expecting it to be available to pharmacies in all other states and territories by the end of May.

My Script List works alongside the electronic token and paper-based prescription systems, and combines a patient's electronic scripts into a single digital list.

Fred IT CEO, Paul Naismith, said the platform would "substantially reduce the administrative burden associated with managing and dispensing prescriptions".

"It means that pharmacists can therefore spend more time where they need to," he said.

## Qld Health Minister thanks pharmacy

**COMMUNITY** pharmacists' efforts to boost influenza vaccine uptake this year has been praised by Queensland Health Minister, Yvette D'Ath.

Addressing the State Parliament last week D'Ath noted flu remained a threat to public health.

"There is still flu circulating every year and, just like COVID-19, it can be fatal, which is why it is vital Queenslanders

book in for their flu shot this year," she said.

"I also remind Queenslanders that it is recommended to wait at least 14 days between the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine.

"Finally, I extend my sincerest gratitude to all those GPs, pharmacies, chemists, aged-care homes and all other vaccination providers assisting in the rollout of the flu vaccine this year."

## Hooper calls time on Sigma career

**SIGMA** Healthcare CEO, Mark Hooper, will leave the company in Oct after more than a decade at the helm.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) this morning Sigma Chair, Ray Gunston, praised Hooper's "tremendous contribution" to the business.

Under Hooper's leadership the wholesaler has undergone a significant restructure, with the

divestment of its pharmaceutical division to Aspen Pharma in 2011, the acquisitions of CHS, MPS and MIA between 2014 and 2018, and the company's transformation program, Project Pivot.

"Mark became CEO at a tough time for Sigma and put it on a pathway for a stronger future," Gunston said.

The Board confirmed it will commence a search for a new CEO shortly.



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## Flu shot needs boost



**AUSTRALIANS** are being warned not to underestimate the potential threat posed by influenza, with uptake of the season shot lagging behind last year's rates.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has urged patients to heed the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation's (ATAGI's) recommendation to get vaccinated against the flu.

Freeman said data from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) showed flu vaccination uptake this year is at less than 40% compared with the same time last year, adding that community pharmacies across the country were suitably stocked to immunise patients, with many stores able to accommodate walk-ins.

"Unlike the COVID-19 vaccine, supply [of flu shots] is plentiful and there are no rollout phases,"

he said.

"Everyone is welcome and encouraged to come forward and receive their influenza vaccine.

"Whilst you are waiting for your COVID-19 vaccine, there is still plenty everyone can do to support our community and protect Australia's most vulnerable.

"One of the best ways is to get immunised against influenza, remembering we need 14 clear days between COVID-19 immunisation and other immunisations.

"So don't forget about your flu shot."

Freeman noted that pharmacies were easily accessible for most Australians, with 95% of capital city residents living within 2km of a community pharmacy, while 65% of rural Australians residing similarly close to a pharmacy.



## Guild, Clubs NSW collaboration

**THE** Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch is aiming to leverage Clubs NSW's advertising network to promote pharmacy-based health programs.

Under an agreement between the Guild and Clubs NSW, the two organisations will work together to promote community health initiatives, including vaccinations being delivered through the Guild's Corporate Health program.

Guild NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, said the collaboration "opens great opportunities for health messages to be delivered to patrons across the State".

He added that the Guild recognised Club NSW's efforts in continuing to reduce harm associated with gambling, alcohol and smoking.

"This agreement also outlines a collaborative relationship for relevant policy and political issues and the opportunity for joint action if and when appropriate," he said.

"Whether it is a large workers club or your local tennis club, just about every population centre in NSW has a club and the reach of Clubs NSW in getting information to these patrons is an important tool which community pharmacies can now use to help improve the health outcomes of those communities."



## Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Collette**



**Needham, Network Partner at TerryWhite Chemmart Ainslie Compounding, ACT.**

### Vaccinations in the workplace

**A CORPORATE** flu vaccination program helps improve accessibility to one of the world's most effective public health interventions.

This week is World Immunisation Week with the theme 'vaccines bring us closer' - this is particularly true for those of us returning to the office after many months away due to social distancing.

As we slowly re-enter the workplace though, it's important to remember that flu is highly contagious yet easily preventable through an annual flu vaccination. And as we approach the cooler months with social distancing more relaxed, now is the time to ensure employees are protected this winter.

More than half of my current flu vaccination bookings have originated from the TerryWhite Chemmart Corporate Flu Program which is accessible across more than 400+ TerryWhite Chemmart pharmacies across the country. The program provides an easy and flexible solution to ensure employees are protected from the influenza virus.

A corporate flu program not only helps reduce absenteeism - which costs the Australian economy around \$7 billion each year in lost wages - but helps to drive uptake in vaccinations and ultimately, bring us all closer together.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about the TerryWhite Chemmart Corporate Flu Program.

## New TTS cases

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) reported three new cases of suspected thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) following vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

The cases were in a 35-year-old NSW woman, a QLD man age 49, and an 80-year-old Victorian.

# SAY HI

Catch the PD team at App!

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## Tassie Labor makes pharmacy pledge

**TASMANIAN** pharmacy owners will gain access to an additional \$1 million a year in funding to deliver after hours and primary health services, if the Labor Party wins this weekend's State election.

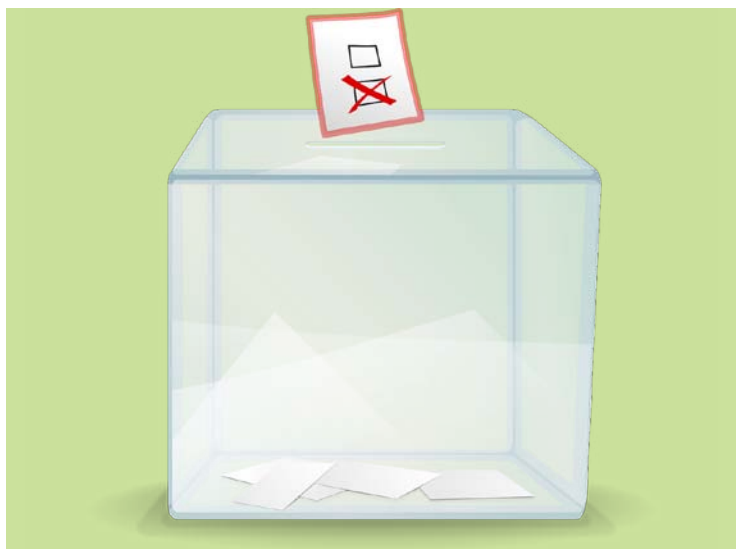
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia Tasmanian Branch announced it has co-signed a Statement of Strategic Intent with the State Labour Party, which will see pharmacists play a greater role in the provision of health services across the island.

The State opposition has also promised to match the Gutwein Government's pledge to "move to enable pharmacist immunisers access to the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for the first time" (PD 22 Apr).

Tasmanian Guild Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, said the statement outlined "a firm commitment that if elected to government, Labor will ensure that older and vulnerable people who are eligible for free vaccination services under the NIP will be able to receive these in their local community, through their pharmacy", while also committing to support the current ownership model.

"It is no secret that pharmacy owners are highly invested into their practices, both professionally and financially", O'Byrne said.

"Ensuring ownership of pharmacies by registered pharmacists preserves the integrity



of medication services provided to the community, ensuring equitable access across our State.

"It is pleasing to see that Tasmanian Labor recognises the significant pressures on the state's health system and also recognises the pivotal role of the community pharmacy sector in delivering medicines and primary health services to the Tasmanian community."

O'Byrne also welcomed both political parties' commitments to expanding community pharmacists' scope of practice, noting she would like to see Tasmania conduct a similar trial to the Urinary Tract Infection Pharmacy Pilot - Queensland, which enables eligible

pharmacists to provide empirical treatment to non-pregnant women with acute cystitis, through the supply of antibiotics.

"International evidence supports full scope of practice for pharmacists," she said.

"With health systems dealing with increasingly complex presentations there are many opportunities to utilise community pharmacies to achieve better health outcomes.

"Through utilising the community pharmacy network and enabling pharmacists to work to their full scope of practice, the State can achieve a more sustainable hospital system and ensure better local healthcare access for all Tasmanians."



## Dispensary Corner

**CHALLENGING** times tend to bring the best out in people, but there's always one prat who becomes even more obnoxious than usual, when things get tough.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we've seen the best and worst of humanity, and few have demonstrated how awful people can be more than a 40-year-old Spaniard who has been charged with intentionally causing injury after allegedly infecting more than 20 people.

The man ignored the pleas of colleagues to isolate after he showed up at work with symptoms and openly coughed while saying, "I'm going to infect you all with the coronavirus", infecting five people, who passed the virus on to family members, including three children, *Europa Press* reported.

He also attended a gym while waiting for the results of a PCR test, where three more people subsequently tested positive for the virus, and who also infected family members.

The man has been released from custody after a court hearing on Sat evening to await a trial date.

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Tanya Maloney, Pharmacy Owner at TWC Coffs Harbour, NSW



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