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**AMH**  
AUSTRALIAN MEDICINES HANDBOOK

## Guild needs to address RPMA funding

**PHARMACIES** in “sizable regional towns” appear to be benefiting from increased funding under the new Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance (RPMA) schedule at the expense of those in Australia’s most remote locations, rural pharmacists believe (**PD** 04 Jan).

In a letter to Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, George Tambassis, and the organisation’s NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, Southern Highlands-based pharmacist, Tim Hewitt, said “it looks like funding has been taken from truly remote pharmacies in favour of increased numbers of regional pharmacies”.

The incoming NSW Guild Branch Committee member said there was “growing disquiet among members adversely affected by the new RPMA schedule now based on the Modified Monash Model [of rural classification] (MMM) and its accompanying payment matrix”. “My understanding is that the MMM is a medical workforce

planning tool, and as such is not designed to be applied to pharmacy or the RPMA, and therefore may be the wrong tool for the job in its current form,” he said.

“Apart from the obvious question of ‘how is it that the new system appears to be leaving so many (especially) remote pharmacies worse off’?, the other burning question relates to what the Guild did or did not know about the likelihood of this outcome.

“It does appear that at least anecdotally, around 60 pharmacies in NSW and perhaps 200 nationwide may be substantially worse off, and most of these are in the more remote locations.

“Further, the new MMM modelling includes many additional pharmacies that could be considered ‘regional’ rather than ‘rural’ or ‘remote’, and that these pharmacies, often in towns served by a number of pharmacies, will now be eligible for RPMA payments of \$3,000.”



Hewitt noted the RPMA was designed to support equity of access to pharmacy services in remote locations, where the viability of pharmacies was “fragile due to the small populations they serve”.

“I am calling on the Guild at a National and State level to firstly acknowledge this anomaly, to gather and provide to members accurate data around the problem, and to put a plan in place to address it,” he said.

Pharmacies in MMM category locations 3 to 7 can submit an exceptional circumstances request to the Federal Department of Health to review their funding under the RPMA (**PD** 05 Jan).

Today’s issue of **PD**  
*Pharmacy Daily* today has two pages of the latest news.

## AHPRA Board recruitment

**APPLICATIONS** for 65 practitioner member and 35 community member positions on Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency’s (AHPRA) National Boards, are set to open soon.

As part of the recruitment process, AHPRA will host Q&A webinars on 20 Jan and 02 Feb with current members to highlight what is involved in being a board member.

Members help set national standards of practice, develop guidance for practitioners on their scope of practice and manage other functions as needed by a National Board.

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## Dispensary Corner

A WEALTHY Indonesian has come up with an ideal way to avoid exposure to COVID-19 while travelling - just buy every ticket on your flight.

Jakarta-based socialite Richard Muljadi has posted a series of photos on social media (pictured), showing how he and his wife had an entire Batik Air plane to themselves on a recent trip to Bali.

The 32-year-old Mujaidi, who is the grandson of Indonesian pharmaceuticals magnate, Kartini Muljadi, reportedly purchased 150 economy class and 12 business class seats, posting "had to make sure no one else is on this flight".

"We ain't flying unless it's just us," he said, adding that the pair were "super paranoid" about being exposed to coronavirus.

"After I'd booked as many seats as possible it was still cheaper than chartering a private jet. That's the trick, fellas #lifehacks," he added.



## COVID hit students' studies: NAPSA

A MAJORITY of pharmacy students across Australia believe their studies have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) National Pharmacy Students Survey (NPSS) reveals.

Students cited factors including, the lack of social interactions with peers, cancellation of practical sessions, the modification of placements and loss of motivation stemming from the crisis, as factors that negatively impacted their studies.

However, others noted that the pandemic had delivered increased access to online materials, while the shift to online learning had allowed them to take on more casual or part-time pharmacy work.

The results of the 2020 NPSS showed students held positive attitudes towards rural placements and future employment, with 81% of those who undertook a rural

placement reporting it had positively swayed them to consider rural practice, with 58% of all students reporting that a rural placement should be compulsory.

However concerns remained around access to hospital placements - with two-in-five respondents reporting they did not have adequate exposure to the sector during their training - wages and the continued growth of discounters, were also seen as issues for students.

The survey also found that the



majority of students believe that mental health first-aid training should be a requirement to gain registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

## GP's pharmacy COVAX concerns

ROYAL Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Vice President, Dr Bruce Willett, is urging patients to go to their GP rather than a pharmacy to receive their COVID-19 shots.

Speaking with the RACGP's *News GP* publication, Willett raised concerns that pharmacies were "less than ideal" locations for the administration of new vaccines, "especially in a pandemic environment", suggesting pharmacists were more focused on sales than healthcare.



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