



Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus a full page from **Willach**.

PSA RAP launch

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) will launch the first stage of its Reconciliation Action Plan, Reflect, next week.

The launch will coincide with National Reconciliation Week, with the PSA is hoping to encourage pharmacists to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements through active engagement.

With less than 1% of Australian pharmacists identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the PSA said it supports measures to increase the number of First Nations people within the profession.

NSW pharmacies brace for COVAX

COMMUNITY pharmacies across NSW will join the COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) program "sooner rather than later", Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, reports.

In a statement released this morning Heffernan urged pharmacy owners to ensure they have booking systems in place and are ready to start as soon as the State Government gives approval.

"There is a real appetite at the Federal and State level to get pharmacies on board as pivotal elements of the vaccination rollout as soon as possible," he said.

"Nationally some 4,000 community pharmacies have been approved as COVID-19 vaccination hubs with the pharmacists already trained and the pharmacies equipped and ready for the COVID-19 vaccinations.

"Importantly, about 30% of these pharmacies are in NSW and they will make an enormous difference

to vaccination uptake once they get the green light.

"The Guild has been working closely with the State Government to get to the stage where pharmacies are able to help protect communities from the virus."

"I urge pharmacies to check their systems as I anticipate the rollout to pharmacies is coming sooner rather than later, with pharmacies in areas of need to be the first to start administering COVID-19 vaccines."

Earlier this week, Guild National President, Trent Twomey told **Pharmacy Daily** that the decision to green-light the rollout of COVAX through pharmacies "sits firmly with the State Premiers", adding it "defies logic not to use pharmacies to boost uptake" (**PD** 26 May).

To date Queensland has been the only state to give community pharmacies the green light to administer COVAX.

The initial approval has been limited to 56 regional and rural



pharmacies, which are expected to commence vaccination services in the coming weeks.

However, Queensland Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, has indicated a desire for community pharmacies across the state to play an active role in the campaign.

"I want you to do mass vaccination, because your communities know you," she told delegates at the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference last week (**PD** 24 May).

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COVAX AEFI reports declining: TGA

INCIDENTS of adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) with COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) declined in the week ending 23 May, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) reveals.

Data released yesterday found 1,609 AEFI reports were made last week, down from 1,860 the previous week, with the reporting rate per 1,000 doses falling from 6.4 to 6.1, with more than 3.6 million doses administered across the country.

The AEFI rate has been declining in recent weeks from a high of 6.7 per 1,000 doses in the week ending 21 Apr.

As of 23 May, Victoria has recorded the highest AEFI rate, with 9.4 cases per 1,000 doses administered, followed by Tasmania, with 7.9 incidents.

NSW and Western Australia have recorded the lowest incident rate, with both jurisdictions reporting 4.2 cases per 1,000 jabs administered.

The TGA revealed an additional

nine cases of blood clots with low blood platelets have been assessed as thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) likely to be linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The authorities noted that using the UK case definition, six were confirmed TTS, while the remaining three were classed as "probable".

The confirmed cases of TTS reported last week were linked to two women in NSW (aged 60 and 82 years), a 72-year-old man and a 51-year-old woman in WA, a 73-year-old woman from Victoria, and a 63-year-old Queensland man.

Probable cases of TTS were in an 85-year-old woman from NSW, a Victorian man aged 62 and a 73-year-old woman from Victoria.

In the period to 23 May, the TGA had received 210 reports of deaths following immunisation, 109 in patients who received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, 94 amongst people who had the AstraZeneca shot, with seven cases where the



vaccine was not specified.

However, the latest TGA COVAX weekly safety report said, "apart from the single Australian case in which death was linked to TTS, COVAX have not been found to cause death".

Common AEFI reports related to headaches, muscle and joint pain, fever and injection site reactions.

Patients who received the AstraZeneca shot also reported chills and fatigue, while those who had the Pfizer-BioNTech shot noted lethargy as a common reaction.

Victoria's COVID watchlist grows

A SECOND Chemist Warehouse (CWH) store has been added to Victoria's COVID-19 list of public exposure sites (**PD 27 May**).

The pharmacy on Greenvale Drive, Greenvale, in Melbourne's north is the sixth to be identified as a Tier 2 location.

The Victorian Government reported that a confirmed COVID-19 case "attended [the] venue] on 25 May between 12.50 and 1.30pm.

Customers are being told to "get tested urgently and isolate until you have a negative result".

CWH Dalton Village, Epping, was previously listed as an exposure site in the latest COVID-19 outbreak to hit Victoria, while Chemist Depot Epping was also named earlier this week (**PD 26 May**).




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Amazon targets physical stores

ONLINE retail giant, Amazon, is considering opening bricks and mortar pharmacies in the US, *Reuters* reports.

An analyst for Mizuho Financial Group told the news agency that any plan to rollout physical Amazon Pharmacy stores was likely to see them co-located within the group's Whole Foods shops.

The analyst described the move as a natural progression for the business.

A spokesperson for Amazon declined to comment on reports, however they noted that Amazon Pharmacy was focused on making home delivery of pharmacy products more convenient and easier for patients.

Amazon filed an application to trademark 'Amazon Pharmacy' with IP Australia early last year (*PD* 15 Jan 2020) to cover "pharmacy packaging services that aligns, sorts and packages a patient's medication by date and time into individual packets".

A decade of opportunity

AUSTRALIA'S primary healthcare system is facing a decade of transformation that will provide community pharmacists with opportunities to play a greater role in patient care, Blooms the Chemist Head of Retail, Emmanuel Vavoulas, believes.

Speaking at the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) last week, Vavoulas said the country's ageing population combined with a forecast "deficit of doctors and nurses" by 2030, would place increased importance on the role of community pharmacists.

"At Blooms the Chemist we believe those community pharmacies that have a collaborative, patient-centred approach to treating and preventing illnesses will play a significant role... between now and 2030," he said.

"As we move forward there will be an increased demand for compounded medicine and further changes to the scheduling of medicines.

"There will be a requirement for more personalised healthcare and our role as a pharmacist will continue to broaden.

"Personalisation [of care] and increased services will provide opportunities for community pharmacists to deepen their customer relationships, strengthen their businesses and help them to differentiate themselves from online stores and transactional providers."

Vavoulas noted that through the challenges of fires, floods and COVID-19, community pharmacists across the country had stayed open, heightening the profession's stature with patients.

"The pandemic meant demands on pharmacists increased 10-fold overnight," he said.

"Community pharmacists provided continuing care and became a trusted source of information, advice and comfort.

"Building on this trusted relationship will place community pharmacy at the forefront of healthcare through every stage of the patient's life.

"The role of the pharmacist has evolved and will continue to... we will increasingly be seen as health service providers rather than dispensers, providing a broad and flexible range of health services both in-person and via e-health."

Dispensary Corner

CRUISE ships have been maligned for much of the COVID-19 pandemic, but now US pharmacy chain CVS is using the lure of a tropical cruise to encourage patients to have a jab. As part of a campaign to incentivise people to stop in to one of its more than 9,600 stores to get immunised, CVS has teamed up with a range of companies, including Norwegian Cruise Lines, Procter and Gamble, and dating app Hinge, to offer prizes as part of a series of weekly sweepstakes.

The CVS scheme will run from 01 Jun as part of a push to meet US President Joe Biden's target of having 70% of the population vaccinated by 04 July.

News agency, *Reuters*, reported that more than half the country's adult population have been immunised to date, however the pace of uptake of the shots has slowed in recent weeks, fueled by a cocktail of ambivalence, skepticism about the vaccine and declining infection rates.

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