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Union targets 30% pay hike for interns

EMPLOYEE pharmacist union, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA), is calling on the Fair Work Commission to boost intern pharmacists' minimum rates by 30% - from \$24.97 an hour to \$32.47, ahead of its review of the *Pharmacy Industry Award 2022*.

With the Commission set to review the Award in Feb 2022, the PPA has launched a petition to secure a base rate of pay to make the profession more attractive to students.

"An intern pharmacist in a community pharmacy earns only \$2 more than an entry level retail worker, despite the years of study, HECS debt, personal liability, and ongoing registration costs," the Union said.

"PPA has been campaigning for improvements to pharmacists pay

and conditions for many years, and in 2019, was successful in arguing for a 5% pay increase under the pharmacy award.

"We're preparing our case for a 30% increase to the graduate pharmacy pay.

"This will reflect the study, training, ongoing professional development requirements, skills and expertise of graduate pharmacists, and is also a reflection of the increasingly significant role pharmacists play in our healthcare sector.

"We're confident a 30% increase... will modernise the pay conditions of graduate pharmacists.

"This will help attract high school students to pharmacy, attract graduate pharmacists to pharmacy as a profession and retain existing young pharmacists in the industry."



MEANWHILE, in a video posted on Facebook, PPA President, Geoff Marsh, praised the commitment pharmacists have shown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

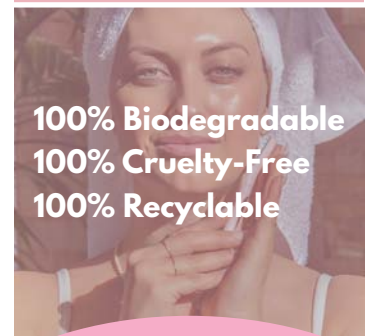
"That commitment has been in the face of working in a climate of low morale caused by poor pay and conditions, a lack of career progression and high workloads," he said.

"I'm particularly concerned about the high workload you're facing... you can only safely do so much."

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See **page three** for more.

Dispensing help

PHARMACY software provider, Dispense Assist is offering real-time help for busy pharmacies, with its team of dispensers available round the clock.

See **page four** for more.

Today's issue of PD

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- PharmX
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States must move on RAT legislation

STATE governments in South Australia and Western Australia are being urged to update legislation for the use of rapid antigen tests (RAT) for home use, by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA).

PSA WA Branch President, Keegan Wong, noted that under the state's Health Act "a person must not use a RAT as a tool to detect or diagnose COVID-19", with an exception for logistical reasons.

"It is currently to be used for

transport, freight and logistics, testing drivers at the borders, but strangely, the legislation has not yet taken into account the state's health workers," he said.

"This goes to show that the McGowan Government is more concerned about border control than the welfare of those on the frontline.

"Antigen testing will become a cornerstone of life as the virus eventually spreads across the nation and will ultimately reduce the risk of pharmacy closures due to COVID-19 exposure and subsequent isolation periods for pharmacists and pharmacy staff.

"For Australia's most geographically-dispersed state, it is imperative that communities continue to have access to essential medicines and health services."

PSA SA Branch President, Robyn John, warned that without reforms

the state would be "left behind".

"The benefits of antigen testing are clear, hence, why supermarket giants have recently announced they will be stocking tests for personal use as of next week. In the meantime, this out-of-date legislation is holding South Australia back," she said.

"Whilst full vaccination decreases the risk of infection, pharmacists and pharmacy staff are not immune to isolation periods and resulting pharmacy closures.

"With other jurisdictions emerging from lockdowns and borders gradually reopening, we need to ensure we are using all the tools at our disposal to continue to detect COVID-19 in the community."

MEANWHILE, Roche Diagnostics Australia has confirmed that its RAT will be available in more than 500 pharmacies, in the ACT, NSW, Queensland and Victoria next week.



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Guild seek equal COVAX pay for all

COMMUNITY pharmacy leaders are continuing to seek improved remuneration for the sector's role in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, with the booster program set to start next month (PD 27 Oct).

With pharmacies currently paid significantly less than GPs for administering doses of the vaccines, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, said the organisation was continuing its efforts to secure "same job, same pay".

"We're in active conversations with the Commonwealth Government," he said.

"There should be one primary healthcare payment, and the Guild will continue to advocate

for that.

"You don't pay a woman less money than a bloke for doing the same job, and you should not pay a pharmacist less money for doing the same job as another primary healthcare provider."

Speaking at a Guild webinar last Wed, Twomey noted that under current processes, pharmacies are set to be paid \$16 to administer a booster to a patient, if they had not received either of their initial doses at the store, or \$26 if they had been given one of their previous doses in the pharmacy.

However, in cases where a patient had received both primary doses in the store, the pharmacy would be unable to claim until 14 Dec (PD 26 Oct).

Dispensary Corner

A UNIQUE contraceptive device for men has taken out a major design award in Germany.

The COSO male birth control gadget, created by University of Munich design graduate Rebecca Weiss is also described as a "testicle bath", which uses ultrasonic energy to temporarily inhibit sperm mobility.

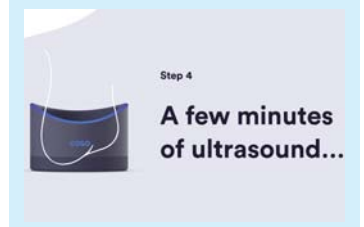
Weiss has been named the winner of the German division of the James Dyson Award, which "celebrates, encourages and inspires the designers of new problem-solving ideas".

The COSO device (screen pictured below) comes complete with a smartphone app to ensure testicles are bathed in ultrasound-energised warm water for sufficient time to create the necessary effect on fertility.

It only needs to be used every few months to keep the sperm inert, meaning they are unable to fertilise eggs during sex.

Weiss said she was inspired to come up with an alternative to the contraceptive pill after being diagnosed with precursor cervical cancer.

She said the lack of male birth control options led her to develop "a new contraceptive approach for men in my master's thesis".



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