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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news plus a full page from **Dispense Assist**.

Bandit jailed

AN ARMED robber who held a replica gun to a Queensland pharmacist's head, and cocked it during a raid, has been jailed for five and a half years.

The 45-year-old bandit, Norman Beech, left staff at the Maroochydore Day and Night Pharmacy terrified after the hold-up on 03 Jun 2020 (*PD* 06 Jul 2020), Maroochydore Magistrates Court was told yesterday.

The Court heard Beech made off with \$1,496.25 in cash, but was arrested a short while later behind a Centrelink office.

In a victim impact statement, the pharmacy owner said he feared for his life during the robbery and suffers from daily panic attacks and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the crime, adding he was struggling to manage the business.

Vic grants support COVAX workforce

COMMUNITY pharmacies in 11 Victorian Local Government Areas (LGAs) will be eligible to access grants of up to \$10,000 to cover costs associated with boosting their COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) services.

The State Government has announced an Expression of Interest (Eoi) process for GPs and pharmacies in Melbourne's outer suburbs, to "turbocharge the local rollout of COVAX" and support them "to fund additional workforce or operational costs associated with the effort".

Under the COVAX Enhancement Grants program successful applicants will be able to access 120 grants of \$4,000, with funding allocated to increase up to 10 of those to \$10,000, "if providers can demonstrate further capacity to deliver".

Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, said the allocation of funding to the program reflected the urgent need to increase uptake in Melbourne's young and diverse outer suburban communities.

"What matters is not the name of the vaccine, or whether its stored in a fridge at a small clinic or a mass vaccination [hub]," he said.

"What matters is getting it into people's arms and that's what these grants are all about.

"Supply to our GPs and pharmacies is improving, and this is a great opportunity for the Commonwealth to provide even more doses to local settings in areas with the most cases."

Welcoming the new grants scheme, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said that the funding would "help boost capacity of pharmacies and general practices to expand COVAX service in the areas of greatest urgency and need".

"As the most frequently visited and accessible primary care destination in Australia – pharmacies are already playing a major role in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout with almost 700,000 doses delivered nationally and almost 130,000 doses in Victoria alone to date.

"With the arrival of Moderna into pharmacy fridges, these numbers are already increasing quickly.

"As the Premier has said, it does not matter where the vaccine is stored and where it's been administered from, as long as it reaches a patient's arm.

"Every little needle in an arm is



a little win and another small step towards easing COVID restrictions and returning to the things we love."

Pharmacies in the Brimbank, Cardinia, Casey, Darbin, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Moreland, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham LGAs seeking to access the program have until midday on Sun 03 Oct to submit an Eoi, demonstrating they have the capacity to maximise their dose administration in the weeks commencing 04 and 11 Oct.

Successful applicants will be notified by Mon 04 Oct, and will be invited to a briefing that evening, with funding to be released "as soon as practicable".

CLICK HERE to access the Eoi form.



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Secure savings

PHARMACY software provider, Dispense Assist, is offering pharmacy owners a secure online tool to meet dispensing challenges when staff are stretched.

The platform claims to reduce staffing costs and minimise dispensing errors, while improving customer satisfaction.

See **page three** for more.

UTS award noms

THE University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has opened nominations for its Innovative Pharmacist of the Year Award.

The award recognises pharmacists who are redefining the profession, and provides the winner with a \$5,000 grant from sponsor, AstraZeneca, to support their professional development.

CLICK HERE to nominate.



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Dispensary Corner

INDIAN health authorities have ordered 246 pharmacies to shut their doors, after investigations found they were dispensing medicines while missing a vital member of staff.

A surprise inspection spree by the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration earlier this month found 277 out of 3,600 pharmacies had been operating without a pharmacist on duty.

Of the 277 stores that were missing a pharmacist when authorities showed up, 31 managed to get their pharmacist to come in before the inspection was completed.

Officials revealed the inspection process was triggered after a number of complaints were made about pharmacies across Maharashtra operating without a pharmacist, *The Indian Express* reported.



TGA sets path for RATs

COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs) will be available for home use by Australians from 01 Nov under a plan released by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) today.

Under the TGA's timeframe, the agency will issue a new regulation by 01 Oct that will enable companies to formally apply for regulatory approval to legally supply RATs for home use.

"This is an important step in supporting the National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response and aligns with the timeframe where it is expected that approximately 70% of Australians will be double vaccinated," the TGA said.

"Individual tests will require TGA approval and inclusion in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) as it is for all other testing kits.

"The TGA has already commenced the review of data and information for self-tests for those suppliers who have responded to the registration of interest process.

"The use of COVID-19 rapid antigen point-of-care tests is one part of Australia's strategy to combat COVID-19."

The TGA confirmed it has



been working with suppliers and manufacturers of the tests to ensure instructions are easy to understand for consumers, that appropriate support is available to answer users' questions and that the tests "perform satisfactorily against variants such as Delta".

Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, said further rules about the use of RATs for home testing would be set by State and Territory governments.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has previously backed the use of RATs to help pharmacies that have been linked to a positive COVID-19 case, to keep their doors open.

Earlier this month, PSA CEO, Mark Kinsela called for RATs to be funded for pharmacy workers (*PD* 17 Sep).

Guild Update

Policy development

SHADOW Health Minister, Mark Butler, has welcomed the constructive engagement of community pharmacists in development of national health policy. In a webinar hosted by Pharmacy Guild National President, Trent Twomey, Mr Butler warned of the need for a new focus on preparedness of our primary healthcare system to deal with a rise in COVID-19 case numbers. Mr Butler said policy settings needed to encourage professional healthcare workers to be able to operate at their highest possible scope of practice.

Affordability of medicines was also a key issue and Mr Butler anticipated further discussions with community pharmacists about the current level of co-payment, to "crunch the numbers". Mr Twomey welcomed this understanding of the pressures pharmacists are facing. He also briefed community pharmacists on rapid progress in rolling out Moderna COVID-19 vaccinations through pharmacies, revealing the Find a Pharmacy website is taking around 1.3 million hits every week.

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