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Politics not patients the focus for GPs

CALLS from medical organisations to block or water down the proposed North Queensland Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot (NQPSPP) are motivated more by political interest than patient care, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, believes.

Addressing the Inquiry into the provision of primary, allied and private health care, aged care and NDIS care services and its impact on the Queensland public health system, this morning, Owen noted that the Guild alongside a number of other primary care organisations, including the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) were on the pilot's Steering Reference Group and were bound by a confidentiality agreement with Queensland Health.

"Over recent days some groups have deliberately breached these arrangements for their own internal political purposes - this isn't putting patients first," he said.

"The Guild believes the

professional training, skill and knowledge of community pharmacists should be acknowledged.

"Pharmacists have the competency and professional accountability to prescribe, dispense, administer and review medicines.

"By allowing community pharmacists to work to full scope with additional University supervised training, we can support our fellow primary health care practitioners to continue to do the important work they do."

Under the proposed pilot pharmacists would be able to prescribe, dispense, administer and review medicines, to reduce non-urgent hospital presentations and admissions.

"Increasing qualified pharmacist's scope of practice will not only provide better local primary health care, but will save the Queensland public health care system an estimated \$1.3 billion from non-urgent emergency department presentations over 20 years," he said.



Guild National President, Trent Twomey, told the Inquiry that Queensland Health Minister, Yvette D'Ath, was waiting for a report on the proposed trial from Queensland Health's Allied Health Division, before green-lighting the NQPSPP.

"The Minister's office is not in receipt of that report, because there are certain forces from other professions - not ours - that are using their contacts within the Department to try and get it blocked," he said.

"And if they can't block it they want things removed, they want to be able to water it down."

Govt slammed for lack of plan

THE Federal Government has been criticised by a Queensland-based pharmacist for its management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking in the House of Representatives yesterday, Graham Perrett MP, said a pharmacist had voiced his frustration at the Government did not appear to have a plan.



Three shots required to be up-to-date

FRESH guidance from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) now defines an adult Australian's COVID-19 vaccination status to be "up-to-date" if they have had a booster or third shot.

The new advice, issued yesterday, noted that while individuals aged 16 years and older have previously been deemed to be up-to-date after completing their primary course of a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved COVID-19 vaccine, the additional

job was recommended to "optimise protection from the Omicron variant".

ATAGI added that it recommended that people who have previously had COVID-19 should still receive all primary and booster doses of the vaccines.

The group also noted that the TGA has been considering which vaccines not already approved for use in Australia as boosters will be recognised as valid by the Australian Immunisation Register for patient who received shots overseas.

RAT imports

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is warning would-be importers of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs) that only approved sponsors listed as entered on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) or their agents are authorised to bring supplies into the country.

In an update issued this morning the TGA stress that the RATs must be the version manufactured and approved for the Australian market and not a parallel import.

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Oral COVID meds warning issued

HOSPITAL pharmacists are calling for a consistent and streamlined approach to the prescribing and dispensing of new oral COVID-19 medicines.

In an editorial published in the *Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research*, senior Australian hospital pharmacists noted while there was strong clinical evidence supporting the use of the recently approved medications, they warned that “potential drug interactions can be very challenging to interpret, predict and manage”.

“A recent review of COVID-19 positive patients for infusion of sotrovimab, a COVID-19 treatment provisionally approved in 2021, found up to one-in-three patients would be potentially at risk of a significant drug interaction if they commenced Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) therapy,” they said.

CLICK HERE to read the editorial in full.

ACCC gives go-ahead for API takeover

RETAIL conglomerate, Wesfarmers, is another step closer to completing its acquisition of Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API), with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) revealing it would not oppose the deal.

The competition watchdog’s Commissioner, Stephen Ridgeway, gave the green-light for the takeover this morning, following a review of the bid (*PD* breaking news).

“Our investigation showed that there are many large and well-established retailers, including Chemist Warehouse, Woolworths and Coles, that will compete strongly with Wesfarmers after the acquisition in both the market for over-the-counter pharmaceutical products and the market for beauty & personal care products,” he said.

“We consider that API’s competitors will continue to compete strongly with Wesfarmers after the acquisition.”

Ridgeway said the ACCC had considered the impact of Wesfarmers owning both the Priceline Sister Club loyalty scheme and having a 50% stake in the

Flybuys program would have on competition within the retail environment, by incentivising or locking customers into shopping at Wesfarmers-aligned pharmacies.

However the regulator found that “Wesfarmers acquiring the Priceline Sister Club loyalty scheme will not have a lock-in effect on consumers in any market”.

“We also consider the benefits obtained from the additional customer transaction data do not appear to be so strong as to result in a substantial lessening of competition from the acquisition,” he said.

“Customers generally do not only join one loyalty scheme, and major competitors to Wesfarmers after the acquisition will have, or could start, their own customer loyalty schemes.”

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX), Wesfarmers noted that “clearance from the ACCC was a condition



precedent for the transaction”.

“Subject to the satisfaction of the remaining conditions, including approval by API shareholders, completion of the transaction is expected to occur around the end of the first quarter of the 2022 calendar year,” the company said.

Responding to the ACCC’s announcement, API told the ASX that an explanatory statement regarding the Scheme of Implementation Deed announced in Nov 2021 (*PD* 08 Nov 2021), is expected to be released next week.

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APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN FOR APPOINTMENTS TO THE VICTORIAN PHARMACY AUTHORITY

The Hon. Martin Foley, Minister for Health, is pleased to invite applications for appointments to the following three (3) positions on the Victorian Pharmacy Authority (Authority):

- Two Pharmacist members (for registered pharmacists only)
- Lawyer member (for a lawyer only)

These positions provide a unique opportunity for suitably qualified and experienced individuals to contribute to the governance of the Authority and protection of the Victorian public.

These are paid, part-time Victorian Governor-in-Council appointments. Suitable candidates may apply for either position. The term of these appointments is up to three years from 1 July 2022.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that government boards and committees reflect the composition of the Victorian community. This includes appropriate representation of women, regional Victorians, Aboriginal people, young Victorians, Victoria’s culturally diverse community, Victorians with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ Victorians. Recruitment will consider both merit and diversity during assessment to ensure that the Authority is a high functioning body and reflects Victoria’s diversity. Adjustments to the recruitment process can be accommodated upon request.

Applications close at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, 21 February 2022.

To make your application please visit <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugs-and-poisons/appointments-to-the-victorian-pharmacy-authority>

For enquiries, including for assistance to understand this document, please contact Helen Seeto at the Department of Health on (03) 9500 6902, using the National Relay Service if required, or by email at dpcs@health.vic.gov.au.

Dispensary Corner

IDENTIFYING satire and just plain-old deluded is becoming increasingly difficult these days, particularly when it comes to sensitive issues.

A screen-grab of a post urging the anti-vaccination mandate brigade to take care of themselves, that was allegedly made on the 2022 Convoy to Canberra Facebook page is one such example of either humour or paranoia.

"Yesterday a member of my resistance crew collapsed and had to be taken to hospital with what appeared to be a wasp sting," the posted said.

"We just heard from his wife this morning, and apparently he was hit in the neck with a blow dart containing Moderna.

"The scariest part is that literally hundreds of people yesterday were complaining about the bee stings and wasp stings, yet no bees or wasps were to be seen."



Vaping ad clamp down

NSW-BASED company and an executive officer of the business have been fined a total of \$90,576 by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in relation to alleged unlawful advertising of nicotine vaping products.

The regulator has issued six infringement notices totalling \$79,920, to JMIT Distributors Pty Ltd, over the promotion of vaping products on the vaporfactory.com.au website, which breached the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

"The TGA contacted the company on multiple occasions and provided detailed guidance about the legal requirements for importers, suppliers and advertisers of nicotine vaping products," the regulator said.

"However, the company failed to come into compliance and continued to advertise nicotine vaping products for supply."

A further four infringement notices totalling \$10,656 were issued to an executive of the firm in relation to advertising breaches on the same website.

"The individual was allegedly responsible for the advertising of nicotine vaping products on a company website," a spokesperson for the TGA said.

"The TGA alleges that the company contravened a civil penalty provision in the *Act* and that the individual who was an executive officer of the company



knew that the contravention would occur and was in a position to influence the company.

"Despite the TGA's correspondence and guidance about the legal requirements for advertising and supplying nicotine vaping products, the individual failed to bring the company's advertising into compliance with the *Act* and failed to prevent the company contravening the provision."

The TGA said breaches in relation to nicotine vaping products were a serious matter, with the regulator stating it would continue to take "prompt and appropriate action to ensure compliance with the law".

The company's vaporfactory.com.au site appears to have been closed with the URL now linking to a Shopify page offering assistance in setting up an online store.

Election ploy not enough: McBride

PHARMACIST-TURNED-FEDERAL politician, Emma McBride, has suggested the Federal Government's decision to make the Wyong-Gorokan and Toukley-Budgewoi areas of her constituency priority areas for GPs, is an election ploy.

While welcoming the decision as "a great relief to many people" in her Central Coast electorate, she said "the Morrison Government has still failed to recognise the severe shortage of GPs across the rest of the Central Coast".

"There are practices in The Entrance, Bateau Bay and other pockets of the Coast that desperately need more GPs," she said.

"They should be a priority too, but they're still being overlooked.

"It's only because... [of] the incredible efforts of our community advocates and doctors that the Government has even taken this step to start to address the GP crisis, but it's not enough.

"This government has failed the people on the Central Coast.

"Clearly, it doesn't consider the health care of people living in the outer suburbs of the region a priority."

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