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Today's issue of PD

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

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COVAX wastage

POWER outages in Western Australia over the Christmas period forced pharmacists to dump spoiled COVID-19 vaccines, the state's Liberal Party Leader, Dr David Honey, told the WA Assembly.

Honey called for the McGowan Government to be condemned for failing to deliver reliable and affordable energy to ensure the vaccines were stored safely.

Real wage decline for pharmacists

MOVES to increase minimum award wages by 4.6% will fail to deliver real wage growth for pharmacy workers, union group, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) believes.

Commenting on the Fair Work Commission's decision to increase the minimum wage (PD 15 Jun), PPA CEO, Jill McCabe, said the 4.6% increase to the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 rates from 01 Jul was a welcome "first step".

"[However] this increase has not kept pace with inflation and represents a decline in real wages for pharmacists who are reliant on award wages," she said.

"Even though pharmacists played an instrumental role in the fight against COVID-19 through the delivery of vaccines and other critical health care services, the majority of pharmacists received no additional remuneration despite the fact that pharmacy employers received a Federal Government payment for each



vaccine delivered.

"Australia's pharmacists remain the lowest paid professionals in Australia and the pharmacy sector requires comprehensive reform to deliver the remuneration and employment conditions our pharmacists deserve."

McCabe also called on employers and government to back calls for significant increases to intern pharmacist pay rates.

"It is vital that the pharmacy sector increases its involvement

in enterprise bargaining, which would give pharmacists a say in their wages and working conditions and deliver sustainable, long-term agreements, which meet the needs of both employees and employers," McCabe said.

Meanwhile the Pharmacy Guild of Australia is urging pharmacy owners to ensure that they review their wages in line with the Fair Work Commission's decision, and undertake any necessary actions to comply by 01 Jul.



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Downscheduling call for antivirals

UNIVERSITY of Southern California School of Pharmacy Dean, Vassilios Papadopoulos, is calling for pharmacists to be allowed to prescribe oral antivirals to treat COVID-19.

Papadopoulos said patients were not getting the medications because “not enough prescriptions are being written”.

“The answer is to let pharmacists join physicians and other health professional in prescribing the COVID pills,” he said.

Papadopoulos noted that “time is of the essence” when it comes to providing patients with access to both Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) and Lagevrio (molnupiravir).

Attempted murder charges dropped

DISGRACED Queensland pharmacist, Curtis Shea Mickan, will not face sentencing for two counts of attempted murder or arson, following a committal hearing yesterday.

Mickan was initially charged with two attempted murder charges and multiple counts of domestic violence following a house fire in the Brisbane suburb of Woolloowin in May 2021 (*PD* 18 May 2021).

However, Queensland Police prosecutors have dropped both attempted murder charges, alongside one count of arson and another charge relating to wilful damage, and replaced them with two counts of unlawful assault, one count of unlawful choking and a fresh wilful damage charge.

Mickan allegedly sparked the blaze while his partner and one of her relatives were inside, however



both escaped uninjured.

The new charges relate to matters which occurred the day before the fire, when he was arrested at the Woolloowin home in relation to a domestic violence incident.

Mickan was taken to the Brisbane watchhouse, and released later that day.

The 36-year-old former pharmacy owner, who appeared via video-

link at the committal hearing at Brisbane Magistrates Court entered a guilty plea to a total of eight charges, seven of which he will be sentenced for at Brisbane District Court.

Mickan will be sentenced in relation to the eighth charge of contravening a police protection order, at Brisbane Magistrates Court at a later date.

Coolleman Court Pharmacy wins again

ACT-BASED Coolleman Court Pharmacy has added the Life Pharmacy Group’s Pharmacy of the Year (PotY) 2022 title to its swelling trophy cabinet.

The win was announced at the group’s annual conference in Forbes last week, less than three months after taking home the Pharmacy Guild of Australia’s PotY Award.

The ACT pharmacy’s Managing Partner, Brooke Veasey, added to the store’s success, taking home the Pharmacist-in-Charge of the Year award.

The judges noted that Veasey

had played a key role in the Life Pharmacy Group’s intern training program alongside Coolleman Court co-owner, Brad Butt.

The Life Pharmacy Group Retail Manager of the Year title went to Dubbo’s Orana Mall Pharmacy’s Leisa Stone.

The group noted that Stone “worked tirelessly to keep the store open and servicing its patients through lockdowns, COVID outbreaks, RAT runs and some of the most difficult trading times in memory”, and delivered “sustained excellence over the past 12 months”.

RACGP takes aim at Guild over NQPSPP

THE Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has described the proposed North Queensland Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot (NQPSPP) as an “ill-founded experiment on an unsuspecting and vulnerable population”.

In an opinion on the RACGP’s *NewsGP* website, the College’s President, Adjunct Professor Karen Price, accused the Pharmacy Guild of Australia of setting out on “a deliberate campaign to seemingly misrepresent the need for pharmacy prescribing to the

Queensland Government”.

“Undoubtedly, there is a conflict of interest to drive higher drug sales, which is not in the spirit of the Commonwealth Government’s medicines policy,” Price said.

“This policy protects patients by separating prescribing and dispensing.”

Price noted that there were more full-time equivalent GPs per 100,000 people in North Queensland (111), than in Victoria (110.2), Western Australia (107.5), Tasmania (106.4), the ACT (93.6) and the Northern Territory (88.7).



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Abuse sees pharmacists walk away

AGGRESSIVE and abusive consumer behaviour is driving pharmacists out of their jobs and adding to the workload of those left behind, a Cairns-based pharmacy manager says.

WholeLife Pharmacy and Healthfoods, Pease Street, pharmacist, Brett Christoffelsz, told the *Cairns Post* that stores in the region are struggling to find suitable staff to replace those who have left the profession as a result of the increased stress fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Because of the COVID situation, frontline workers have borne the brunt of abuse, impatience and frustrated patients," he said.

"Not blaming anyone, but everyone has just been stressed and needs their healthcare looked after and because resources have been stretched so much, there has

been a tipping point.

"It's had a flow-on effect to where we're losing people to the industry because they don't want to put up with that.

"It's really been our more resilient workers who've stayed on, but the situation has made it less attractive to new people."

Christoffelsz said he has regularly worked six and seven-day weeks to cover staff shortages, adding that he was hopeful that the new pharmacy program at James Cook University's Cairns campus will provide homegrown graduates to fill positions, but noted "that's a couple of years away".

"It would definitely ease the pressure, especially when someone goes on leave or they're sick," he said.

In the meantime, Christoffelsz said the store was looking to



recruit British pharmacists, through the Priority Migration Skilled Occupations List.

The National Skills Commission noted that hospital and community pharmacies in regional parts of every State and Territory in Australia - excluding the ACT - were experiencing workforce shortages when it produced the Commonwealth Government's Skills Priority List last year (*PD* 13 Jul 2021).



Dispensary Corner

THERE is never a good time for the onset of norovirus, but getting that sudden queasy feeling in your gut while behind the wheel of a car must be particularly unpleasant.

Unfortunately for one Irish motorist that sensation came over them last week as they were on a major highway near Dublin.

Unable to pull over in time the contents of the driver's stomach launched across the dashboard, and the understandably distracted individual drove off the road, flipping their vehicle.

The driver was hauled from the upturned car in a somewhat undignified condition, seemingly less concerned about the condition of the vehicle than being seen by passersby.

Dispensary Corner understands that insurers have deemed the car to be a write-off, inside and out.



Comirnaty review

THE European Medicines Agency (EMA) has started a rolling review for a version of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine, Comirnaty adapted to provide better protection against specific variants of the virus.

The composition of adapted vaccines will ultimately depend on recommendations from public health authorities and the World Health Organization.

Women in pharmacy networking event

PHARMACY wholesaler, Symbion and specialist accountants, Pitcher Pharmacy, are hosting a networking event for women in the sector.

The event which is being held at St Margaret's Art Centre in Ascot, Brisbane from 6pm to 8.30pm on Wed 29 Jun, will include a panel discussion focused on the pandemic challenges and post-pandemic opportunities.

The panel will include TerryWhite Chemmart (TWC) Arana Hills Managing Partner, Karen Brown, LiveLife Pharmacy Group Partner, Jacqueline Meyer, Aspect Health Director, Sanam Souzani, and TWC 2021 Pharmacist of the Year, Emma Conway, from Lucy Walker Pharmacy Goondiwindi.

CLICK HERE to register to attend the network event.



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