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Pharmacy at a crossroads: March

OUTGOING Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) President, Dr Geoff March, is warning the sector will struggle to attract and retain talent if it fails to address low wages.

March's departure from the union's leadership, after close to two decades in the role, was confirmed this morning, following the election of incumbent PPA Treasurer, Leon Yap, as the organisation's incoming President (**PD** breaking news).

Announcing his retirement as PPA President, March said the pharmacy sector was at a "crossroads" with high levels of dissatisfaction amongst employee pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

"While improvements in practice are required, better wages and conditions for employee pharmacists are imperative to attract and retain a quality pharmacy workforce now and into the future," he said.

Incoming PPA President, Yap, committed to continuing to pursue

the organisation's campaign to boost graduate wages by 30%, and urged pharmacists to support the union.

"I am acutely aware of the challenges facing employee pharmacists and pharmacy technicians across the country, whether it be poor pay and conditions, heavy workloads, or lack of career progression opportunities," he said.

"In order to bring about urgent change in these areas, I encourage employee pharmacists to join PPA."

Commenting on March's retirement, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, acknowledged his long service and commitment to the profession.

"We may not always have seen eye-to-eye on some of the details but the relationship between the Guild and PPA under the leadership of Geoff March has been built on respect and on the importance of listening to the views of one another," Twomey said.



"Geoff always brought to the table an unparalleled wealth of knowledge and cultural understanding of the pharmacist profession.

"During his years in the pharmacist union movement, Geoff and I have met many times to discuss issues affecting the community pharmacy sector and the pharmacist profession.

"While at times these meetings have been robust, there has always been a sincere and genuine mutual respect for each other's viewpoint which has enabled us to establish and maintain a good working relationship for the best interests of pharmacists and patients."

Today's issue of **PD**

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from **Good Price Pharmacy Warehouse**.

Police charge pharmacy bandit

A **40-YEAR-OLD** Novocastrian man is behind bars facing multiple charges relating to a hold-up at a pharmacy earlier this week.

The unnamed suspect allegedly threatened staff at a Newcastle, NSW, pharmacy on Tuesday, while serving a Community Corrections Order for another offence, the *Newcastle Herald* reported.

He was arrested on Wed after attempting to flee from police.

The man is set to face court on charges of armed robbery, break and enter, trespassing and resisting police, in May.

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Dispensary Corner

GREEK prosecutors are investigating a pharmacy owner and two police officers who are alleged to have supplied and used fake COVID-19 test certificates.

The trio were arrested last week in northern Greece, as part of an ongoing investigation into scams relating to falsified documentation, the Athens-based *Kathimerini* publication reported.

The prosecution claims that between 21 Nov 2021 and 27 Feb, the pharmacist and a former employee issued 16 fake certificates to seven customers, including a police officer and a member of the Greek military.

The store's owner issued two more dodgy documents to police officers last week, before being busted for operating the fraudulent scheme.

The three individuals have been brought before the courts on charges of violating measures that were implemented to prevent illnesses in the community, with the pharmacist facing an additional count of violating laws on drug possession, after arresting officers found he had 32 pills of a prescription medicine, but did not have a script for them.



Tassie kids miss COVAX opportunity

EFFORTS to roll out COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) to Tasmanian children are being hampered by the State Government's failure to authorise pharmacies to administer the shots, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

With Federal Government data from 01 Mar showing that 95% of the island-state's population aged 16 years and older have received at least two doses of a COVAX, Guild Tasmanian Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, noted the significant contribution community pharmacies have made to driving vaccine uptake.

"The strong figures in Tasmania could not have been achieved without the availability of vaccines through community pharmacies," she said.

"Tasmania's community pharmacies were brought into the vaccination program later than the rest of Australia, not receiving the go ahead from the State Government until late Aug 2021.



"But from the moment the service became available to our communities, the uptake has been phenomenal.

"Accessibility is a major factor in people choosing to receive the vaccine.

"Community pharmacies have continued to be accessible, staying open later and on weekends, and providing vaccinations where people want them, and when they want them."

However, she noted that the rollout of paediatric vaccines in Tasmania has been sluggish, with

parents unable to go to their local pharmacy to access the shots for their children.

"It is critical that this group, and indeed all Tasmanians, are able to easily access COVID-19 vaccination services in community pharmacies for their initial and subsequent doses," she said.

"While other Australian States have given approval for community pharmacies to provide this critical service to children, the Tasmanian Government has not – we urge them to do so as a matter of priority."

TGA issues fine over unlawful RAT ad

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued a \$13,320 infringement notice to Melbourne-based business, Getafix Cafe Pty Ltd, in relation to unlawful advertising of a COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) on its website.

The company is alleged to have promoted the RAT without complying with the relevant advertising requirements, in breach of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

"Advertising of RATs must comply with the advertising requirements set out in the Act, which include complying with

the Advertising Code and the Therapeutic Goods (Restricted Representations - COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests) Permission (No. 2) 2022," the TGA said.

"The TGA contacted the company on multiple occasions, providing detailed guidance on how to comply with the requirements and, in particular, the conditions set out in the Advertising Permission.

"The company failed to come into compliance."

The regulator stressed that advertising breaches in relation to RATs were serious and urged the public to report suspect ads.

APC COVAX requirements

ALL members of the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) Board, staff and contractors are now required to be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations (COVAX), to attend in-person meetings.

In a statement released yesterday the APC said it "will not engage contractors who are not fully vaccinated".

The Council added that while its Canberra office had reopened, it was not open to the general public without a scheduled meeting.

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