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## WholeLife stars

**WHOLELIFE** Pharmacy and Healthfoods hosted its inaugural conference this week, and celebrated the group's star performers.

See **page four** for more details.

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# NPS funding decision 'misinformed'

**MINISTER** for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler's decision to go ahead with the Coalition's pre-election Budget plan to defund NPS MedicineWise, has disappointed many in the pharmacy and wider health sector.

The move, which has prompted the organisation's board to announce it will be wound up on 31 Dec (**PD** 14 Sep), has been described as a "tragedy for consumers, pharmacists and medical practitioners", by former NPS MedicineWise Director and pharmacist, Debbie Rigby.

"They had an opportunity to reverse the decision and chose not to," Rigby said of the Labor Government.

"Quality use of medicine (QUM) and medicine safety is a national health priority and yet the Government chose not to fund NPS MedicineWise."

Commenting on the decision to strip funding from NPS MedicineWise on Twitter, consultant pharmacist, Jenny Gowan, said it was "hard to accept the loss of this excellent resource for all health professionals as well as consumers".

"This is effective evidence-based education that has been shown to make a difference," she said.

"A misinformed decision that I

was sure Mark Butler would rectify, a gross loss for quality use of medicines."

Former NPS MedicineWise CEO, Adjunct Associate Professor Steve Morris, said it was "a very sad day".

"It will be missed by many, none more so than consumers," he said.

Meanwhile, in a message to its members the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) praised NPS MedicineWise for its stewardship of national QUM activities.

"NPS MedicineWise has contributed significantly to QUM, health literacy and education for Australian clinicians and the Australian public," the SHPA said.

"As a proud member of NPS MedicineWise, SHPA collaborated with NPS MedicineWise on many important QUM projects since the National Prescribing Service was established in 1998, rebranding to its current name in 2010."

NPS MedicineWise resources are used daily by SHPA members



in their practice and continuing professional development, and SHPA will advocate for these important projects and programs to continue.

"For a time, the SHPA secretariat even shared offices with the NPS MedicineWise staff based in Melbourne.

"SHPA will continue to support independent QUM programs which place Australians' health as the utmost priority."

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## Owners must know their business

**PHARMACY** owners are being warned that they must maintain oversight of the operations of their stores, or risk facing regulatory action for incidents related to employees.

Speaking at Pharmacy Connect earlier this month, Pharmacy Council of NSW Professional Officer, Georgina Woods, told delegates that the regulator saw cases involving proprietors who were “not quite aware of what’s happening in their pharmacy”.

“We must be able to see that you can demonstrate oversight,” she said.

“It’s really important for owners, because everyone that’s working for you, all of their activities you are ultimately responsible for.

“You are responsible for everyone, employed pharmacists, graduates, locums.

“I had this story when I was at Pharmaceutical Defence Limited, and I had this poor proprietor ring

up - he said there had been an incident.

“His delivery driver went round to someone’s house and there was a dangerous dog, it was barking.

“The delivery driver stressed out and he literally pitched the bag of drugs over the fence and the dog ate the whole bag of drugs.

“It was not clever - I asked what was in the bag, and of course it was a ridiculous combination, aripiprazole and benzos, it was awful.

“The dog survived, which was fantastic... but [there were] very upset owners and a very large veterinary bill.

“The delivery driver made a very poor decision, but that proprietor was responsible for that decision.

“It’s a good example - you might not even be there [when an incident occurs] but it’s going to come back on you.”

Woods added that there can be no “silent partners” in pharmacy



ownership, stressing that owners - regardless of the size of their stake in a store - need to have oversight over the business.

“I know there are people who aren’t active in the business, but... if you have a vested interest in a pharmacy then you must be able to prove that you’ve got oversight,” she said.

“Know what your business partners are up to, know what your employees are up to.”

## Philip Morris makes FDA hires

**TOBACCO** giant, Philip Morris International, is turning to former US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials as it seeks to expand its “smoke-free” business.

The company has appointed Dr Badul Chowdhury, as its Chief Life Sciences Officer, with Dr Matthew Holman being named as Vice President, US Scientific Engagement and Regulatory Strategy.

Chowdhury has previously worked for the FDA’s Pulmonary Division, and was a Chief Medical Officer at a biotech firm developing inhalation products for rare respiratory diseases.

Holman joins the tobacco behemoth having served for more than 20 years as the FDA’s Director of the Office of Science at the Center for Tobacco Products.

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### Dispensary Corner

**PARDONED** American fraudster and former pharmacist, John Duncan Fordham, is looking to reclaim more than US\$500,000 in restitution payments.

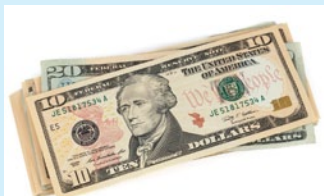
The Augusta-based pharmacist was jailed for four years for defrauding the state of Georgia and a health insurer, and ordered to pay US\$1 million in restitution.

However, since receiving a Presidential pardon, during Donald Trump's final days in office, Fordham argues that the restitution payments he has made should be refunded to him as a result of the former president's act of clemency.

Fordham launched legal action to recoup the US\$259,000 he has paid to the Georgia Department of Administrative Services and US\$272,000, given to the Great American Insurance Company, plus interest, last week.

Fordham was convicted of participating in a scheme that saw him provide kickbacks to a State politician who helped him land a contract with a local mental health centre.

Michigan State University Law Professor, Brian Kalt, said that while the pardon wiped out the restitution payments Fordham had already made, "it seems doubtful that he'll be able to get the money back".



## Cost neutral e-scripts essential: Guild

**PHARMACISTS**, prescribers and patients should not be expected to cover costs associated with electronic prescriptions, under future arrangements for the system, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, believes.

The Department of Health and Aged Care confirmed that it will continue to "reimburse the cost of electronic prescribing SMS notifications" for original and repeat e-script tokens until 31 Mar, or the conclusion of its Request for Tender (RFT) process for the provision of e-script delivery services.

The 15 cent e-script fee will also be maintained until the end tender process is finalised, but Tassone told *Pharmacy Daily* that there has been no change management support to help pharmacies roll out the system.

"Community pharmacies have gone to great lengths to implement electronic prescriptions into their practices at a fast rate, during a global pandemic with no support from the Commonwealth in terms of the purchase of additional IT equipment or change management," he said.

"Whatever arrangements are finalised through the RFT process



for e-scripts, there cannot be any cost for users of the system be it: prescribers, pharmacies or patients.

"There is a myth needing busting within the Department of Health that electronic prescriptions have somehow generated significant workflow efficiencies and other benefits for community pharmacies.

"To the contrary, e-scripts have created another additional challenge and pressure for pharmacy staff to incorporate.

"Despite providing previous proposals and submissions to the Department of Health for financial and other support for community pharmacies to support the change management of implementation of electronic prescriptions, none has been forthcoming.

"The Guild is in the process of

finalising another proposal to the Department to help support pharmacies in digital enablement of the electronic residential medication chart (eNRMC) in aged care facilities.

"Again, there is a false assumption that pharmacies will be great beneficiaries from the introduction of the eNRMC into aged care and not needing any support with the focus of any financial incentives needing to be focused solely on the aged care facility themselves.

"All the while, the pharmacy is significantly changing their workflows and ways of doing practice often at a significant financial and time cost to work around the needs and requirements of aged care facilities."

### Bloom boosts EBOS Board

**FORMER** Scentre Group Chief Financial Officer, Mark Bloom, will join EBOS Group's Board as an independent director tomorrow.

EBOS Chair, Liz Coutts, said Bloom will bring "substantial value to the EBOS Board" as a result of extensive commercial and financial experience with listed companies in Australia.



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The Pharmacy Guild of Australia



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