



Hunt shuts down ownership reforms

FEDERAL Health Minister, Greg Hunt, will not seek to amend pharmacy ownership rules despite pressure from medical organisations to allow GPs to become pharmacy owners.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Vice President, Dr Chris Zappala, told *ABC Radio Queensland* that deregulating the community pharmacy sector would make the delivery of healthcare “more convenient”, during an interview yesterday.

However, the Minister voiced his support for retaining the status quo, which has been endorsed by recent state government reviews of the ownership rules in Queensland and Western Australia.

“So we have a very, very clear set of rules regarding pharmacy ownership which follows in fact the recent reviews and we, through a bipartisan approach, reaffirmed those rules in the Parliament in the course of the last two years,” Hunt said.

“So we’ve only just re-legislated in this space and there are no plans to change that.”

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President,

Anthony Tassone (pictured), hit out at Zappala’s push to allow doctors to own and co-locate pharmacies within “a hub centred on the GP that becomes a one-stop shop so the patients can get everything they needed done at their usual local general practice”.

“The assertions by Dr Zappala that general practice-owned pharmacies would increase convenience for patients are at odds with the substantive evidence that formed a key part of the Guild’s submission to the competition policy review that demonstrated that community pharmacies are more accessible for the Australian public than other services, including supermarkets, banks and medical centres,” he said.

“You would be hard pressed to find a general practice in a town and not a pharmacy and that’s largely thanks to pharmacy location rules that have helped disperse the PBS-approved community pharmacy network promoting equity of access,” Tassone added.

“Maybe general practice should have location rules, instead of allowing itself to be corporatised?”

“Maybe that would help distribute their network more



effectively.

“Pharmacy ownership and location rules regulation is in place not for the benefit of community pharmacies but for the public.

“We need to be looking for solutions to the problems we are facing in our healthcare system, and a concern from consumers is about access to GPs – not access to pharmacies or their local community pharmacist.

“The sooner we can have a mature conversation about the issues and challenges being faced by the Australian public in accessing healthcare, the better for patients.”

The Consumers Health Forum of Australia voiced its concern that the ongoing turf war between the medical and pharmacy professions, does little for patients.

“The squabble between doctors and pharmacists does no good for consumers,” the CHF said in a social media post, adding: “It’s about health dollars not health care.

“[It’s] time for each side to put patients’ interests first - collaboration not competition.”

Pharmacist to face audit

CONDITIONS attached to a pharmacist’s registration will be amended to permit her to meet them.

Following her reprimand by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal last month (*PD* 17 Jul), Lauren Murray, was due to face an initial audit of her practice within the next two months, after being found to have misappropriated medicines while working at Box Hill Hospital in 2014.

However, Murray told the Tribunal that she plans to commence maternity leave in the coming weeks, prompting the Tribunal to amend the condition to allow the audit to take place within two months of her return to work, if she does not practice as a pharmacist within the next two months.

In light of Murray’s pregnancy the Tribunal also granted the Pharmacy Board of Australia the discretion to decide to extend the term of other conditions, including that she must nominate a professional mentor for a minimum period of 12 months.

Murray will still be obliged to commence the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia’s Ethics and Dispensing in Pharmacy Practice course, within the next three months.

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Symbion opens Qld DC



COMMUNITY Service Obligation wholesaler, Symbion, has officially opened a \$59 million distribution centre in Acacia Ridge, Queensland, with Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt officiating at the event.

The new development builds on the success of the company's \$40 million Keysborough facility in Melbourne, which opened in 2014.

Incorporating automation technology developed by SSI Schaefer, the southern Brisbane development has been positioned to "support the future needs of Australia's changing healthcare market".

Symbion's parent company, EBOS Group released its financial results last week (**PD 23 Aug**), noting strong growth from the wholesaler, particularly in gross order receipts (GOR), praising the company's "excellent service levels and

relationships with both the private and public markets".

The group also applauded "solid growth" within its wider Australian business, including the commencement of its exclusive pharmaceutical distribution agreement with Chemist Warehouse.

Pictured at the opening is Symbion Chief Executive Officer, Brett Barons; Federal Minister for Health Greg Hunt; EBOS Group Chief Executive Officer John Cullity; and Senator Amanda Stoker.

Inset, Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt, and Senator Amanda Stoker.

Pharmacy owners urged to adopt STP

PHARMACY owners are being encouraged to embrace Single Touch Payroll (STP) before the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) deadline 30 Sep.

A Pharmacy Guild of Australia spokesperson said most accounting software providers have enabled their platforms to comply with STP requirements.

"The main payroll software providers and third-party providers have updated their software products for STP," the spokesperson said.

"We strongly suggest members make sure they update their accounting software to the latest versions, and contact their



software provider to confirm whether it is STP-enabled.

"Any further questions or issues should be directed to the ATO website."

Hospital pharmacists strike in NZ

IMMEDIATELY after ending their initial four-day strike (**PD 23 Aug**), hospital pharmacy workers in Canterbury, New Zealand have issued notice for more action.

The APEX union, representing pharmacy staff employed by the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB), issued a notice of a complete withdrawal of labour from 6pm next Fri to 6am the following Wed.

APEX advocate, Denise Tairua, said the further strike action represented the union's dissatisfaction with both pay and on-call rates, amid calls for a 3% pay increase.

Tairua also claimed the CDHB declined the union's invitation to

mediation last week.

"With no plans to return to bargaining and no offer in sight, pharmacy members have been left with no other option but to take further industrial action," Tairua said.

"Members are feeling frustrated and undervalued. These delays in receiving an offer are just not good enough."

APEX represents pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and assistants employed at Ashburton, Burwood, Christchurch and Hillmorton hospitals.

No patient treatments were deferred during the previous strike period.



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Dispensary Corner

THE following is the tale of a man who tried to do wrong by pharmaceutical science...but science fought back.

Michael Algieri entered an Oakland, Maine pharmacy on Halloween night back in 2007; but he was not there to trick or treat.

Wearing a black ski mask, a hooded sweatshirt and camouflage gloves, Algieri approached the pharmacist holding a knife and carrying a black bag.

"I want your oxycodone and I'm not kidding with you," our antagonist demanded.

Algieri fled the pharmacy with more than \$500 worth of Roxicodone, Oxycontin and Percocet, but police were able to recover some of his clothing and knife.

The Maine State Police Crime Laboratory found DNA on the ski mask and knife, but the lab was unable to match the items to a known criminal offender at the time.

Lab technicians entered the DNA into the Combined DNA Index System, known as CODIS, where it stayed until Feb 2017, when a comparison found a match to Michael Algieri.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation then investigated, arresting Algieri, who pleaded guilty to the robbery charges in Apr.

Judge Lance Walker sentenced Algieri to 85 months in prison and three years of supervised release.

It seems Mr. Algieri fought pharmacy, and pharmacy won.

Wales to represent ACT



DISCOUNT Pharmacy Macquarie's Jack Wales (**pictured** above) will represent the ACT in the finals of the 2019 Pharmacy Guild of Australia/Maxigesic Pharmacy Assistant of the Year (PATY) Award.

Wales saw off competition from eight rivals to win the ACT PATY gong at a workshop on Tue.

He will represent the Territory at the 2019 Pharmacy Assistant National Conference in Brisbane on 12 Oct.

Wales will compete against the other State and Territory PATY winners for the national title, with the winner taking home more than



\$10,000 in cash, a training package, access to educational conferences and other rewards.

Guild National President, George Tambassis, congratulated Wales on his "strong commitment to his role" and encouraging other pharmacy assistants to strive for success.

Tuggeranong Discount Drug Store's Annie Stone (**pictured** above) took out the ACT Glucojel Super Star Award for outstanding customer service.

Stone will also represent the ACT in Brisbane in Oct, competing for the Glucojel Super Star Award National Title.

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Vanuatu celebration

THE Celebration Travel Company is offering a five night "couple's getaway" at Iririki Island Resort priced from just \$1,175 per person.

The deal includes daily buffet breakfast, a romantic dinner for two, a sunset cruise, free wi-fi, airport transfers, a \$100 day spa voucher and \$100 "Celebration credits" towards food and beverages.

For details call 1300 880 571.

Discount adventures

G ADVENTURES has savings of \$852 on a Mekong River Cruise departing in Oct, giving participants the opportunity to experience Cambodia and Vietnam from a unique perspective.

The fully escorted trip includes an eight day voyage aboard a classic riverboat from Siem Reap to Ho Chi Minh City.

A 30% discount means it's priced from \$1987 per person - gadventures.com.au.