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NSW's \$1m mental health pledge

PHARMACISTS in regional NSW will be able to access mental health training to support patients living in drought affected communities, through a \$1 million program.

The funding, announced by NSW Nationals MP, Leslie Williams, at last Thu's Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch Parliamentary Dinner in Sydney, aims to take advantage of pharmacists' strong relationships with their communities.

Speaking on behalf of Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, Williams said that having been the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health, she understood "the valuable role community pharmacies play in our health system".

"Pharmacists are uniquely placed to be able to develop strong, lasting relationships with their customers," she said.

"With this additional training, they will be able to provide much needed mental health support to their communities, providing genuine support for people who need it, easing the burden on frontline services.

"During this unprecedented drought, mental health issues

are more prevalent than ever in regional communities.

"We know that it is tough out there, which is why we are working hand in hand with mental health services to make sure people receive the help they need."

Williams noted the State Government was also aware of the challenges facing rural pharmacy owners, in terms of rent security and the costs of ensuring their premises are fit for purpose.

She told the attendees at the dinner that the Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development had pledged to investigate the rental risks regional pharmacies face.

"Given the important role pharmacies play in our communities, we know we cannot afford to lose them," she said.

Guild NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, welcomed the Government's support for the community pharmacy sector.

"Mental health training of this type will be a valuable and beneficial asset for pharmacists and their patients across the State," he said.

"It is great to have this kind of support for the role that



pharmacists play in their communities, particularly in rural and regional areas where access to other health care professionals may not be available.

"Community pharmacists are Australia's most accessible health care professionals, and through that regular contact they develop ties with and knowledge of their patients."

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) NSW Branch President, Peter Carroll, also backed the State Government's investment.

"The PSA fully supports the announcement by the NSW Government and looks forward to working with them to equip pharmacists in further supporting these communities," he said.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news plus a full page from Wizard Pharmacy Services.

MA backs spend

MEDICINES Australia (MA) has welcomed data from the Commonwealth Department of Health (DoH) showing a 4% increase in net expenditure on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in 2018/19.

The DoH Annual Report 2018/19, released last week, revealed PBS spending topped \$9.8 billion.

MA CEO, Elizabeth de Somer, praised the Government for investing in listing new medicines and expanding indications boosting access to treatment for Australians.

The DoH report found pharmacists dispensed an average of 800,000 prescriptions a day for PBS listed medicines in the 2018/19 period, with 98.2% of PBS medicines delivered as per the Community Service Obligation.

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Dispensary Corner

MEDICAL instructions can be confusing.

A very tiny, shy, lady stopped by her pharmacy with a script after visiting her doctor.

She confided incidentally that the nurse had given her a bottle to take a 24-hour urine sample.

Just before closing time that night, she called, desperation in her voice, urgency in each word.

"I can't reach the doctor or his nurse," she said in a strained whisper, "so maybe you can tell me what to do."

"It's only been 12 hours since I left the doctor's office, and I can't hold it any longer."

SOMETIMES you can't win when trying to help customers, but at Christmas time (only nine weeks away) it's worth a try.

A pharmacist surrounded by many shoppers had a young man push through to ask for a tube of "Prolong".

The discreet pharmacist produced the desensitising cream only to be asked, "Will it really help my Christmas tree?"

Unsure if she was being played, the pharmacist described how it would help the young man's sex life.

He turned a deep shade of red and slunk out of the store.

A television advert for "Prolong" for your Christmas tree made it all clear.

A few days later another man asked for the same product.

"Is it for your Christmas tree?" the pharmacist asked.

The man laughed saying, "I haven't heard it called that before."

Deregulation carries risk

HEALTH expenditure could blow-out if moves to deregulate the pharmacy industry were to be enacted, Medici Capital Managing Director, Frank Sirianni, warns.

Speaking at the Medici Capital/Attain Business Brokers Pharmacy Business Dinner in Sydney last week, Sirianni noted that overall health expenditure was under control.

"We really don't have a fundamental problem in terms of the health expenditure in Australia," he said.

"When you compare us to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, we're well within the range."

"The reality is the deregulated markets such as the US, Canada and Japan is really where we see these high volumes of expenditure."

"So to some extent deregulation in the health space can be a very difficult thing, because it leads to adverse effects in terms of over consumption and from that point-



of-view it's an issue we should be driving in public."

Sirianni's warning on the potential negatives of deregulation came in the wake of repeated calls for reform of the pharmacy sector's Ownership and Location Rules.

In recent months former Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Chair, Graeme Samuel, has claimed "there's no justification for these rules" and warning that they have stifled competition in the sector (PD 22 Oct).

US indie pharmacies need protection

INDEPENDENT pharmacies in the US face a higher risk of going out of business than their chain-owned competitors, new research reveals.

The data published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found 9,654 pharmacies across the country closed between 2009 and 2015, with independently owned stores three times more likely to fail than chain pharmacies.

University of Illinois at Chicago Associate Professor of Pharmacy Systems, Dima Mazen Qato, noted that independent

pharmacies were often excluded from preferred pharmacy networks, which impacts their viability.

Qato said efforts to improve access to medicines had focused on cutting costs, "but affordable medications aren't easily accessible when a local pharmacy closes".

She also voiced support for payment reforms and strengthening the regulation of pharmacy access standards to protect pharmacies most at risk of closure.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is

Aaron Dentamaro, Financial Controller, Razor Group.



What's in your shoebox?

GONE are the days when a business can survive running out of a shoebox, only to be opened when tax time rolls around.

Shoebox accounting is when you throw everything in a box to be completed later... and when that time comes, it's often too late. It makes it difficult to get an accurate picture of your financial health.

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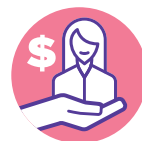
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