

## No masking Vic face mask bungle

**POOR** execution of the 'Masks for Vulnerable Victorians' scheme may make pharmacists reticent about participating in unremunerated programs in the future, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, warns.

Tassone told *Pharmacy Daily* that despite being repeatedly told by the State Government and Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that "community pharmacy is respected and valued", issues faced by the sector throughout the COVID-19 crisis left many feeling less than appreciated.

"The 'Masks for Vulnerable Victorians' initiative was very well intentioned, and community pharmacies showed their support by placing orders promptly to help respond to requests from their patients to obtain a mask," he said.

"Unfortunately, the execution of this program has nowhere near met the expectations of our members

or the public with long wait times for receiving any stock [if at all] and the Guild needing to continually follow up with the Victorian DHHS to obtain updates.

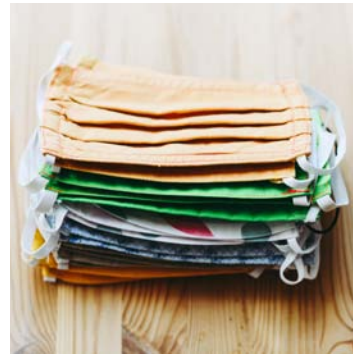
"Community pharmacies have continually turned up and opened their doors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and been there for their patients.

"Amongst all of the challenges they have had to face, pharmacies have also had to field queries about the Victorian government's 'Masks for Vulnerable Victorians' and comfort the public for a poorly executed program that was beyond their control.

"This is all without any remuneration and very little recognition.

"The Guild continually hears from the government and the Victorian DHHS how much community pharmacy is respected and valued. It is increasingly difficult to believe and feel that when we are not kept updated and consulted despite being a major delivery arm of their own program.

"It is in the DNA of pharmacists and pharmacies to do whatever they can for their patients and communities.



"The COVID pandemic has been difficult for everyone and we can only hope that given the experiences had with this program that pharmacies won't have second thoughts participating in the future for similar initiatives."

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*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of news, plus a **full page** from Bird Healthcare.

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## PPA COVID-test petition launched

**PROFESSIONAL** Pharmacists Australia (PPA) is stepping up its campaign to urge the Queensland State Government to drop plans for a trial of pharmacy-based COVID-19 testing in the State.

The union has launched a Megaphone.org.au petition calling on Queensland Health Minister, Dr Steven Miles to "abandon" the pilot, warning it "will endanger the occupational health, safety and welfare of pharmacy employees and the health of the community" (PD 07 Sep).

"We've seen that even with highly trained medical staff adhering to strict infectious disease protocols, COVID-19 has successfully infected large numbers of health workers," PPA said.

"The plan by the Queensland Government to make every pharmacy in the state a COVID-19 testing centre is reckless and puts the health and safety of pharmacy employees and the community they serve at risk."

At the time of publication almost 220 people had signed the online petition, which was launched over the weekend.

**CLICK HERE** to view the PPA petition.

## New ADHA CEO

**INTERIM** Services Australia CEO, Amanda Cattermole, has been appointed as the Australian Digital Health Agency's (ADHA) Chief.

Cattermole will officially assume the position on 29 Sep, taking over from interim CEO, Bettina McMahon, who has been in the role since Feb, following the resignation of Tim Kelsey in Dec (PD 10 Dec 2019).

Cattermole brings expertise in digital transformation across government and within the health sector, to the role.

## Pharmacists critical to COVID vax

**PLANS** to implement a large scale COVID-19 vaccination program in Australia can only be achieved if pharmacist immunisers are engaged, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Dr Chris Freeman, believes.

Yesterday he issued a statement calling on State and Territory Governments to enact harmonised legislation allowing trained pharmacist immunisers, in line with the Federal Government's commitment in the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (PD Breaking News).

Freeman highlighted the role pharmacists have played in boosting influenza vaccine uptake, while continuing to serve local communities and maintaining frontline Pharmaceutical Benefits

Scheme medication supplies, to push for the administration of any approved COVID vaccine to be included in pharmacists' scope of practice.

"The large scale rollout of this vaccine can only be achieved by also utilising pharmacist immunisers conveniently located in the community across Australia," Freeman said.

"This will be particularly critical in rural and remote areas where there may be a limited number of GPs."

Freeman's comments came after the Federal Government announced it had signed an agreement with AstraZeneca to secure 34 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, currently being developed by researchers at the University of



Oxford, should it pass safety and efficacy standards, with the first batch of doses due early next year.

The Government has also signed a heads of agreement for CSL to supply 51 million doses of a vaccine being developed by the University of Queensland, with the first tranche of doses expected to be available by mid-2021 should it prove successful.

## Intern starts aged care pen pal program

**INTERN** pharmacist, Tahlia Parisella, has started a pen pal program between children at a primary school in Bicon, Western Australian, and local elderly patients, in an effort to reduce the impacts of social isolation.

Inspired by her interactions with isolated patients while delivering medications, Parisella said she had initially hoped to see the pen pals have "semi-regular meet-ups", but the COVID-19 pandemic stopped that.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia WA Branch President,

Dr Fei Sim said the program was an innovative way to help older patients deal with the impacts of COVID-19, which could lead to more serious mental health problems.

"This is such a great initiative and really showcases how pharmacies and community pharmacists are integral to local communities," she said.

"It provides an alternative lens to holistic healthcare provided by pharmacists in the community which extends beyond conventional consultations, very innovative and impactful."



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## Dispensary Corner

**THE** noble game of cricket may be the latest victim of COVID-19, after an Australian player in the UK was suspended over accusations of using hand sanitiser to affect the spin of the ball during a match last month.

Veteran bowler Mitch Claydon will not play the next game for Sussex, pending the outcome of an investigation into "placing hand sanitiser on the ball in our match against Middlesex".

It wasn't quite a clean sweep, but 37-year-old Claydon took three wickets in the Bob Willis Trophy game, which Middlesex won by five wickets.

The England and Wales Cricket Board is currently looking into the allegations.

**AMERICA'S** creaking health system is once again under the microscope after the family of a woman who died six months ago received a letter telling her to self-isolate due to COVID-19 infection.

Tennessee-based Sandra Whittington died of respiratory complications on 16 Feb, some weeks before the virus was detected near her home.

The update from the local health department apparently related to the results of a test conducted in mid-Jun, some 20 weeks later.

Her family confirmed she had been cremated in Feb, making it somewhat difficult to comply with the quarantine order.

Health officials apologised for the mistake and the pain it may have caused the family, according to the local TV station.

## Buyers be ready: Sirianni

**ASPIRING** pharmacy owners are being urged to prepare their finances and do their homework before going to the market looking to secure a store, by Attain Business Brokers Director, Natalie Sirianni.

In a buyer-focused edition of the *Sirianni Market Update*, Sirianni said preparation was key to making a successful pharmacy acquisition.

"Sometimes buyers can move a bit too slowly," she said.

"They don't have the information prepared, they don't have their finance ready to go and that means they can miss out on good opportunities, because what we have to remember is there is really strong demand in particular locations - particularly if you're looking at metropolitan Melbourne or metropolitan Sydney pharmacies.

"So it's really important that you have everything ready to go so you can move on those opportunities as they come up."

Sirianni added that while accessing advice from experts is important for those looking to get into pharmacy



ownership "it's really important to remember that it's your money that you're putting on the line".

"As the pharmacy buyer it's really important that you understand what's going on and you make your own decisions in that regard," she said.

"Have people around you that can help you keep that rational frame of mind, because it's easy to get caught up in the emotion [of buying a pharmacy]."

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## Guild Update

### Social media use

**AHPRA** and the National Boards say while they appreciate the importance of a vigorous national debate on public policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, they have received concerns about the conduct of some health practitioners engaged in online discussion, including in semi-private forums.

In a statement they have reminded all registered health practitioners that their obligation to comply with their profession's code of conduct, applies in all settings – including online.

The codes of conduct emphasise that practitioners must always communicate professionally and respectfully with or about other health care professionals.

AHPRA and the National Boards say community trust in registered health practitioners is essential.

"Whether an online activity can be viewed by the public or is limited to a specific group of people, health practitioners have a responsibility to maintain professional and ethical standards, as in all professional circumstances," the statement says.



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