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Woolies wants to support not disrupt

SUPERMARKET giant, Woolworths, is pledging to strengthen Australia's community pharmacy sector if its bid for wholesaler, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API) is successful.

In an open letter to pharmacists - published in today's edition of *Pharmacy Daily* - Woolworths Group CEO, Brad Banducci, has moved "to allay misplaced concerns" about the company's intentions.

"We are not here to disrupt the sector," he said.

"We are here to help strengthen it.

"We strongly believe that a strong local community pharmacy health model is key to the health and wellbeing of our local communities and nation overall.

"Through our proposal to acquire API, we are committed to helping those in the sector successfully operate their independently owned businesses.

"Our investment revolves around

bringing a set of capabilities we believe can help strengthen the existing vital role you play in the community for the benefit of both patients and customers."

Banducci said he understood pharmacists' concerns over Woolworths' bid "given the history of perceived rivalry between the pharmacy and supermarket sectors", but stressed the company will not seek to change pharmacy location and ownership rules under his leadership.

While rival bidder, Wesfarmers' Managing Director, Rob Scott, told *Pharmacy Daily* that the company would help API's pharmacy banner groups' franchisees to compete against supermarket giants in the front of shop health and beauty categories (*PD* 16 Dec), Banducci suggested there was little overlap between pharmacy and supermarket shopping intentions.

"To the extent that our supermarkets and Big W stores participate in the health and



beauty space, we are very aware of the practical reality of the distinct shopping missions and fundamentally different customer experiences of pharmacy versus supermarket shopping," he said.

The Woolworths CEO did not directly address concerns about how it would manage data from the Priceline Sister Club loyalty scheme, however, Banducci said the company would use its "extensive experience in areas such as digital, loyalty, payments, analytics and importantly, privacy" to work with API to support their pharmacy partners.

See **page three** for more.

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news plus a full page from Woolworths Group.

New indication

FROM 01 Jan 2022 Forxiga (dapagliflozin) will be funded through the PBS to treat symptomatic heart failure with reduced ejection fraction.



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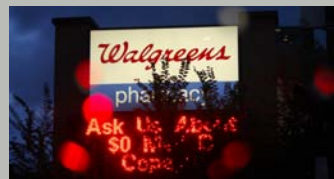
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US pharmacy staff plan strike action

PHARMACY employees of US chains, CVS, Walgreens and Walmart, are set to walk off the job today in response to poor pay and working conditions.

Several news sites have reported that workforce shortages and high workloads are leading to increasing levels of burnout amongst pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, as demand for COVID-19 and influenza vaccines surge.

The proposed action follows recent contract negotiations between CVS and the United Food and Commercial Workers union, which secured a 10% pay



increase over three years.

One New York-based pharmacist told online publication *Rollcall*, that he had been working 80 hours a week at a CVS store before quitting his job in Oct due to burnout.

"It's so overwhelming, the amount of work and not having any help, that I don't even get to use the restroom," he said.

Philips CPAP recall continues

ELECTRONICS firm, Philips, has confirmed close to 20% of registered CPAP, Bi-Level PAP devices and mechanical ventilators affected by degrading PE-PUR foam, have been corrected under its repair/replacement program.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) noted that the rollout for Philips' DreamStation ASV, DreamStation ST AVAPS, 50 Series ASV, C Series ASV (60 Series), and C Series S/T AVAPS (60 series) devices will begin in the coming weeks.



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Dispensary Corner

COVID-19 has taken its toll on the hopes and dreams of many around the world, particularly for artists.

However, a return to the pharmacy workforce provided salvation for Irish singer-songwriter, Loah (aka Sallay Matu Garnett).

The musician, actress and TV presenter, who starred as Mary Magdalene in Jesus Christ Superstar, in London's West End in 2019, had been planning to migrate to the US to pursue her artistic career, prior to the outbreak of the global pandemic.

"It was really good for my mental health and self-esteem," she said of her time back behind the dispensary.

"At the time, all my plans were getting cancelled, like everyone else's, so I felt very glad that I had made the sensible decision to do pharmacy when I was a teenager.

"I worked very hard in a pharmacy for 18 months, and I kept doing my creative work.

"Now I'm back to doing art full time, and I've got to do all these amazing things that I never dreamed I would do."



Booster support needed

RURAL pharmacies and general practices will need additional support to ensure COVID-19 booster vaccines are delivered in a timely manner, Merriwa pharmacist, Robert Smith, believes.

Speaking with *ABC Upper Hunter's On Breakfast with Amelia Bernasconi* this morning, Smith, said the accelerated rollout of the booster program had left some pharmacies "a bit behind the eight-ball" in terms of accessing vaccine stock.

"The announcement for the booster shots coming forward to five months actually occurred the day after our order was due," he said.

"So we're not expecting most of our vaccine [stock] to arrive until 07 Jan 2022."

In addition to the challenge of accessing stock in a timely fashion, Smith said the high levels of demand for boosters was likely to put significant pressure on primary care providers.

"My concern, taking the pharmacist's hat off for a second, and just going from a rural community health advocacy position, [is] how are we going to get all of our community vaccinated

in a timely manner?" he said.

"I think the GPs and pharmacies probably aren't the basis for mass vaccination.

"So we're probably going to need a bit of help.

"We're going to need something like the Australian Defence Force (ADF) or Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to come in and set up little clinics strategically to take the load off.

"We can certainly play a role, but to get everyone done, we're going to need a bit more support."

Smith backed NSW Health Minister, Brad Hazzard's call for the booster doses to be brought forward to three months after the second primary shot, in line with the UK's approach.

"I think ideally we'd be at that [three-month interval] at the moment if we had the capacity," he said.

"We certainly wouldn't be able to deliver the number of doses in the timeframe they're talking about [at the moment].

"If they're going to bring it forward they're going to need to have the support measures that go with it - and it probably should be - so we need help."

Permanent ban for naturopath

UNREGISTERED naturopath, Fay Fain, has been issued with a permanent prohibition order, barring her from providing health services, by the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC).

The HCCC launched an investigation into Fain's practise after receiving a number of complaints that included two clients having to be transported to Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital with fever, hypotension, acute kidney injury and systemic inflammatory response after being given IV infusions on 02 Dec 2020.

The investigation found that Fain was not trained or qualified to administer the infusions without supervision, and that she failed to recognise the seriousness of the patients' conditions when they suffered serious adverse reactions.

The HCCC said, "Fain also does not appear to have any meaningful insight with respect to the serious risk to the health and safety" of the patients.

Corum focused

PHARMACY software provider, Corum Group, is setting its focus firmly on the health sector, with the sale of its real estate e-commerce unit.

Corum Managing Director, Julian Sallabank, said the decision to sell the "non-core business unit will allow Corum to focus its energies and investment solely on its health division", going forward.

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Australian Government Department of Health

Pharmacy Programs Administrator

Woolworths Group backs Pharmacies' role in the Community

Dear Australian Pharmacists,

I'd like to introduce myself to you and share a little more background on our proposed non-binding indicative offer to acquire Australian Pharmaceutical Industries Limited (API).

First and foremost, Woolworths Group greatly respects the role of the local pharmacy (and indeed the role of the pharmacist) in the Australian community. Through our proposal to acquire API, we are committed to helping those in the sector successfully operate their independently owned businesses.

Our investment revolves around bringing a set of capabilities we believe can help strengthen the existing vital role you play in the community for the benefit of both patients and customers.

We also understand the concern and speculation around our long-term intentions in this space given the history of perceived 'rivalry' between the pharmacy and supermarket sectors. So let me provide you with some tangible, concrete reassurance.

As I have communicated to both the leadership of your industry bodies and to Federal and State political stakeholders, Woolworths Group fully supports the existing community pharmacy model, including the long-established ownership and location rules.

We are not here to disrupt the sector. We are here to help strengthen it. We strongly believe that a strong local community pharmacy health model is key to the health and wellbeing of our local communities and our nation overall.

To allay any misplaced concerns, quite simply, you will not see pharmacies relocated into any of our supermarkets. The law does not allow it, and we have not in my time, and will not, advocate for any change to those laws. To the extent that our Supermarkets and Big W stores participate in the health and beauty space (which is on a limited overlap basis, primarily in toiletries and personal care), we are very aware of the practical reality of the distinct shopping missions and fundamentally different customer experiences of pharmacy versus supermarket shopping.

We are also fully aligned with the efforts of the pharmacy industry to expand the scope of services that local community pharmacies offer. One modest indicator of this is that we were pleased recently to sign an agreement with the Pharmacy Guild regarding its Corporate COVID Vaccination Program that will help to support more than 170,000 of our team members across Australia.

But our proposed investment in API goes much deeper than our foundation alignment on the important future of community pharmacies. We know the reliable and timely supply of medicines, in particular, is critical to any pharmacist, and their patients. We will invest in API's operations in the wholesale distribution of pharmaceutical and other products. In doing so, we'll draw upon our supply chain and retail capabilities to deliver a more efficient and effective service tailored to the needs of local pharmacies, to ensure that all Australians continue to have timely and cost-effective access to the full range of PBS and other medicines regardless of where they live.

Like many other sectors of the Australian economy, we know the expectations of your patients and customers are changing rapidly when it comes to convenience, value and experience. This change may present some challenges, but it also creates exciting opportunities for the sector - from the role and scope of pharmacists in the community, to the benefits that digital technologies can deliver for you, your patients and your customers.

In that context, using our extensive experience in areas such as digital, loyalty, payments, analytics and, importantly, privacy we will work with API to support their community pharmacy partners, helping them thrive in the growing health and wellness sector, and also create better experiences together for the customers and patients they serve.

Yours sincerely and Merry Christmas,

Brad Banducci
Chief Executive Officer
Woolworths Group

