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## COVAX booster model unsustainable

COMMONWEALTH health officials will need to rethink the fee structure for the national COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) booster campaign, if they want community pharmacies to participate in significant numbers.

Speaking to **Pharmacy Daily**, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said there were “no excuses” for the Federal Government’s failure to provide “same job, same pay” for all primary care immunisers.

Under the current remuneration model pharmacies will be paid \$16 per booster dose, \$10 less than than metropolitan stores have been allocated for administering second doses under the primary COVAX campaign.

“Pharmacies can’t be expected to subsidise the Australian Government’s booster program,” he said.

“If a government - be that Federal or State - does not step in to

support us, you will not get as high an uptake by pharmacies [as in the original COVAX program].

“It should primarily be the Commonwealth, because it’s their program.

“The pharmacy profession is exhausted and from here on it’s unsustainable without proper remuneration.”

Tassone said the failure to appropriately remunerate the sector to participate in the program was impacting the rollout, with just over 1,150 pharmacies signing up, resulting in fewer access points for patients seeking booster doses.

MEANWHILE State and Territory governments are seeking greater clarity on the future structure of the national COVAX and booster campaigns.

A spokesperson for the Victorian Government told **Pharmacy Daily** that state-run clinic had administered half the vaccines administered in the jurisdiction to date and backed calls for



appropriate funding for community pharmacies to participate in the program.

“A greater uptake of primary, including community pharmacies would ease pressure on state sites - allowing this workforce to support other areas of the health system that are under pressure,” they said.

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See page four for more.

### Today’s issue of PD

**Pharmacy Daily** today features three pages of news plus full pages from:

- PharmX
- Sigma Healthcare

### Iron supplements

SIGMA Healthcare is promoting its Ferrosig+C Tabs 30 Modified Release iron and vitamin C supplements for patients whose dietary intake of both nutrients is inadequate. See page five for more.

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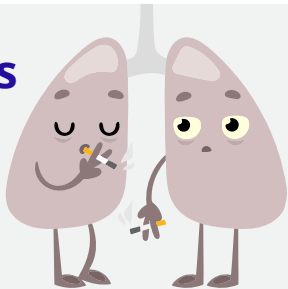
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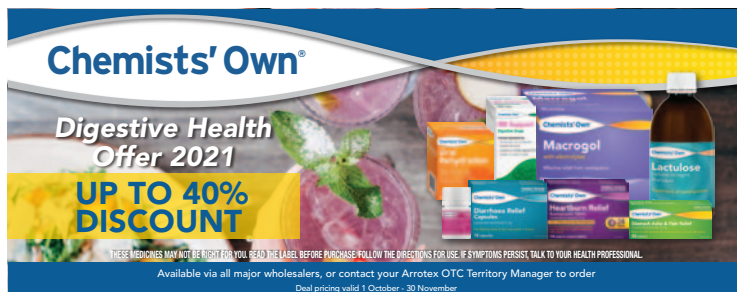
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## Pharmacist 'a substantial risk'

A SYDNEY-BASED pharmacist's professional registration has been cancelled by the Civil and Administrative Tribunal NSW.

The Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) reported that Tony Saab, who had been the co-proprietor of the PharmaSave Pharmacy, Granville, was found guilty of professional misconduct.

Between Jan 2015 and Mar 2017, Saab allegedly dispensed "substantial quantities of S8 and S4D drugs to 38 persons, including anabolic steroids, which were not for a therapeutic purpose".

He also failed to notify authorities of "the apparent loss of significant quantities of methadone".

The Tribunal found that Saab "poses a substantial risk" to members of the public.

## Guild pushes for equity of access

**INEQUITIES** in access to emergency supplies of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines for patients eligible for Closing the Gap (CTG) co-payment relief, need to be addressed.

Speaking during a webinar last week, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, welcomed the Federal Government's decision to extend Continued Dispensing for all S85 medicines until 30 Jun 2022, but raised concerns that at-risk groups were being excluded.

"It's not perfect, because CTG scripts for First Nations people - much to my disgust, are still not eligible," he said.

"One of the barriers [to access to medicines] is cost, so just because I can renew a script for an Indigenous Australian, if they don't have money, unfortunately their regular scripts are free, but if I do Continued Dispensing they've got to pay.

"I've [also] got many National Councillors like Chris Owen, who are big in the S100 specialised medicines space, like HIV medicines for the patients that we look after, and again they are not eligible.

"We were hoping it was going to be made permanent, and we were hoping that there wasn't going to be that discrimination against those two cohorts of patients.

"We need to get rid of that discrimination."

Twomey noted that over the last 17 months there have been more than 360,000 "occasions of service" where pharmacists dispensed medication under the emergency Continued Dispensing measures, "and not one adverse event".

"Each one of those 360,000 occasions of service prevented a potential hospitalisation, prevented an unnecessary GP visit, or prevented - what's even worse - that somebody went without an essential medicine," he said.



"So this is just good public policy, and it needs to be made permanent."

The Guild President told attendees that the organisation's State and Territory branches were working with the relevant authorities to ensure they "update their responding instruments so they don't expire on 31 Dec as they're currently scheduled to".



## The Pharmacy Salary and Market Report 2021

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## Dispensary Corner

**VEGANS** have a bit of an uphill battle to spread their meat-free predilections onto others, if a recent survey of US children is any indication.

The shocking results of the poll found that more than a third of kids aged 3-7 believe hot dogs and chicken nuggets are actually vegetables.

The study was published in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, with the researchers asking kids to sort food items into "animal-based" or "plant-based" categories.

Scarily, bacon, cheese and hamburgers were also believed to have plant origins by a large proportion of those polled.

The researchers postulated that schools don't spend enough time teaching children where food comes from, while the number of kids who actually live on farms had dramatically declined over the last 50 years.

In addition, "parents may deliberately withhold information about animal slaughter in an attempt to safeguard childrens' innocence, viewing the realities of meat production as too gruesome for children to know at a young age," the report suggested.

Another intriguing part of the study asked children to classify items as "OK" or "Not OK" for them to eat.

While most of the respondents correctly agreed that dirt, sand and grass were not edible, curiously more than two-thirds of the youngsters also put cow, pig and chicken in the "Not OK to eat" category.

# HEALTH & BEAUTY

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