

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## New pharmacy body expensive, anticompetitive

A new pharmacy regulatory body comprising nine pharmacists and one accountant is unnecessary, anticompetitive, and will cost taxpayers almost \$10 million.

The Pharmacy Business Ownership Council has been given powers previously held by Queensland Health to issue, change, suspend and cancel pharmacy business licences.

The Council was originally proposed to be made up of law, accounting and business management experts, with members representing the pharmacy sector and the community.

However, the membership announced on 3 September comprises four existing pharmacy business owners, five registered pharmacists and a chartered certified accountant.

"Queensland already has the most anti-competitive pharmacy ownership laws in the nation," AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim, a former pharmacist, said.

"Not only is pharmacy ownership restricted to pharmacists or their close relatives, this new council will decide on which pharmacists can open a new shop. This can only further reduce competition.

"All members appointed to the council bar one have conflicts of interest as pharmacists or pharmacy owners.

"This council is unnecessary, anticompetitive and expensive, and has been established against the advice of the federal and Queensland Productivity Commissions, the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, the RACGP and AMA Queensland.

"Where is the community representative? Where are the independent law and business management members? Where is the health economist?

"Even worse, the Government is making taxpayers foot the bill for the council for the foreseeable future.

"Just establishing and running the council is estimated to cost Queenslanders \$9.8 million for the next four years.

"That's before taking into account any associated rises in the price of medicines due to this anticompetitive decision – a decision that goes against the recommendations of Queensland Parliament's own 2018 committee inquiry."

At least 12 publications and research articles since 1999 have called for reform of ownership and/or location rules for pharmacies.

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