

Politicians run roughshod over patient safety

The head of Queensland's peak doctor group has slammed a Parliamentary committee move to let pharmacists operate practically unchecked in the state.

In its 100-page report, handed down today, a Parliamentary inquiry into setting up a pharmacy council in Queensland has made 11 deeply concerning recommendations, including:

- Allowing pharmacists who are not qualified as doctors to give out emergency and repeat prescriptions,
- Considering allowing community pharmacy assistants to handle dangerous drugs, and
- Setting up a Pharmacy Advisory Council without the expertise of a doctor.

AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia urged the Health Minister to reject the pharmacy industry's push to take over the role of qualified GPs.

"Queenslanders must be able to trust that their health is being looked after by skilled, qualified doctors, not drug dispensers," Dr Dhupelia said.

"You wouldn't let a podiatrist perform brain surgery and it's not okay to let pharmacists prescribe medications or provide inexpert medical advice.

"The Health Minister is duty bound to protect patients, not bow to the pharmacy lobby's greed and make it easier for people to buy drugs without a prescription or seeing a doctor."

Dr Dhupelia called on the State Government to incentivise pharmacists to work within GP practices.

"The public health system would save \$545 million over four years by having pharmacists working within GP practices," he said.

"But that saving has been ignored by this committee.

"Instead, it's proposing changes that are dangerous to patients and could be disastrous for our health system."

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