



**PATIENTS THE BIG LOSERS FROM QUEENSLAND PHARMACY
 INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS**

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that patients will be the big losers if certain recommendations from the Queensland Pharmacy Inquiry are adopted and implemented.

Dr Bartone said that the Queensland Parliament’s Health, Communities, Disability Services, and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee *Report into the Establishment of a Pharmacy Council and Transfer of Pharmacy Ownership* has delivered recommendations that not only significantly fragment health care, but will lead to worse health outcomes for patients.

“The Report contains recommendations to expand the role of pharmacists, including in relation to the prescribing of medications,” Dr Bartone said.

“It is well known that the more that other non-medical health professionals are involved in prescribing, the higher risks of medication error and adverse reactions.

“We are in the middle of a real effort to introduce the medical home concept in Australia, where GPs are able to coordinate patient care, with full access to a patient’s medical history.

“GPs are the only trained primary health professionals who have the skills needed to properly and comprehensively diagnose patients, prescribe the right medications, and refer patients to other health care providers as appropriate.

“These are skills that come from years of observing and examining patients, and understanding how text books and the real live patient overlap.

“Clinical training is an art that has its foundations over the centuries, and cannot be learnt by simply and solely reading texts.

“GPs currently work closely with their pharmacist colleagues on a daily basis, and respect the unique skills they bring to the care of patients, particularly with respect to the quality use of medicines.

“But let me be very clear about this Report, which completely overlooks the reality of quality primary health care - it totally ignores the well-understood need in our health system to strengthen the coordination of care, and the need to encourage patients to have a long-term relationship with a usual GP or general practice.

“The Report also opens up a serious conflict of interest for pharmacists who will gain commercially through prescribing of medications, and then being able to dispense them.

“We already know that pharmacies sell many complementary medicines that are not backed by clinical evidence. This highlights the retail pressure they are under to sell products to consumers regardless of patient need.

“The recommendations in this Report, if adopted, would set Australia on a dangerous course.

“We have a GP-led model of care that is the envy of the world, and we know that GPs are highly accessible in most parts of the country.

“We have primary care outcomes that are second to none.

“Any access concerns cannot be solved by providing a second-best alternative.

“The Australian community deserves more than this. We need to build on this proven model of GP-led care, rather than undermine it by giving in to the retail interests of the pharmacy sector,” Dr Bartone said.

17 October 2018

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