

Personal Information

Pharmacy Apprenticeship: 1958 to 1961 (4 Years)

Registered Pharmacist: 1963

Pharmacy Owner:

Ungarie (NSW)	1964 to 1968
Narrabri	1969 to 1998
Retired	1998

Changes to the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement

I believe the two rules in place that should be considered are:

1. Ownership of Pharmacies: This rule should remain untouched. Only pharmacists can own pharmacies. A pharmacist owner has total control over –
 - a. The hours that the pharmacy is open to satisfy their customers' requirements.
 - b. The staff numbers that are required, both qualified and non-qualified, to effectively manage the pharmacy and provide their customers with high quality health services.
 - c. The quality of the staff involved.
 - d. Adequate rates of pay to retain the staff involved.
 - e. The ability to satisfy customers in out of hour's emergency situations.

If ownership was open to Woolworths and Coles, for example, then we would experience the following negative results.

- a. Woolworths and Coles are so protective of their bottom line profits that they wouldn't provide the Pharmacist Manager with both the qualified and non-qualified staff that the pharmacist requires to effectively run the pharmacy and meet the necessary regulatory requirements.
- b. Another strategy they usually employ is to deliberately sell below cost price for up to two years to eliminate their opposition. We have seen this happen to fruit and vegetable shops, butchers, newsagents, service stations, bottle shops, corner stores, etc.; so why would they not add pharmacies to the list?
- c. If the Manager Pharmacist breaks some regulatory requirements, (mainly due to lack of staff and time constraints), it is that pharmacist who faces the Pharmacy Board or District Court, (not Woolworths or Coles – they just employ another pharmacist).

The ownership of pharmacies by pharmacists should never, ever be changed.

2. Locality Rules: These locality rules should be totally removed. Their removal would create the following –
- a. Far more competition with the addition of more pharmacies and easier access to pharmacy by customers in strategic locations.
 - b. Good opportunities to all those unemployed pharmacists to open pharmacies in strategic positions. (I believe that there are a big number of unemployed pharmacists). They could even have partnerships where one pharmacist is supervising the dispensary and the other is available for customers to discuss their medication regimes and health problems.

All these recently qualified pharmacists have a wealth of medication knowledge that they can share with their customers.

Under the present locality rules, the recently qualified pharmacists have little to no chance of purchasing a pharmacy because of the huge figures that they sell for and the low salaries that these pharmacists have.

Just imagine Australia with 6,500 pharmacies, instead of the 5,000 currently, strategically placed. This would create the following:

- I. More competition as each pharmacy competes for customers with both service and price.
- II. Better medication advice for all customers as each pharmacy strives to meet their customers' health requirements.
- III. Greater access to pharmacy services for many people.
- IV. Much better financial survival, with no Woolworths or Coles or other non-pharmacist organisations with their predatorial tactics.

If the ownership rules are changed, Australia will regret this greatly, as once changed, it can never be reversed. The amount of pharmacy bankruptcies will increase dramatically, with Woolworths and Coles the big winners. (They already control more than an 80% share of all food, petrol, alcohol, stationery, etc.). Please don't let them add pharmacy to their list of conquests.

Only one item of the current agreement needs changing and that is THE LOCALITY RULES.

Bruce Ireland
Retired Pharmacist