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## **LEAKED QLD GOVERNMENT PLAN WILL DELIVER SECOND-RATE HEALTH CARE SAYS AMA**

The AMA today called a confidential proposal to expand the role of pharmacists in North Queensland a further attempt by the Queensland Government to undermine the role of General Practice and a risk to patient safety.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid urged the Queensland Government to rethink the North Queensland Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot saying it involved serious conflicts of interest and would deliver second-rate health care.

“If this goes ahead, we will see pharmacists becoming de facto GPs, encouraged to diagnose and treat a range of potentially serious health conditions – including prescribing and dispensing a range of medicines despite a lack of training.

“Pharmacists are not doctors. They are experts in medication and a key part of community health care but lack the necessary training and experience that makes General Practice such a critical part of our health system. When a patient visits their GP, all their health needs are taken into consideration in arriving at a diagnosis and treatment plan.

“The Pilot proposes a very disease specific approach, which means there is a very high chance that serious underlying health conditions will be overlooked or simply misdiagnosed.

“There are serious conflicts of interests involved in this proposal, with pharmacists encouraged to not only diagnose conditions, but also sell patients medications based on this diagnosis.”

Dr Khorshid said the Pilot was a slippery slope towards a model of care that rewards pharmacists according to how many medications they can dispense – regardless of a patient’s needs.

“While this might be good for the bottom line of pharmacies, it undermines the long-standing separation of prescribing and dispensing which has been an important feature of our health system and is critical to the safety and quality of prescribing.”

Professor Chris Perry AMA Queensland President said the Pilot continues with the dangerous precedent established in another trial in Queensland, which allowed pharmacists to dispense antibiotics for urinary tract infections (UTIs).

“We are yet to see any evaluation of the UTI antibiotic trial in Queensland and we’re concerned it was poorly designed and implemented with no evaluation of patient health outcomes.

“The UTI trial risked unnecessary use of antibiotics and a potential increase of antimicrobial resistance in our community.

“There is a global crisis with the emergence of ‘superbugs’ around the world. Addressing unnecessary use of antibiotics is a critical priority in our fight against these ‘superbugs’. All governments should be working together to fight the threat of antibiotic resistance, rather than increasing the risk through poorly designed initiatives such as this.”

Dr Khorshid said the Queensland Government needed to dump the proposed trial and instead work more closely with GPs to support better access to care and end the ideological war on general practice in Queensland.

“There is no doubt that patients in regions like North Queensland need and deserve better access to care. However, bypassing the critical role of general practice and fragmenting care for patients will only worsen health outcomes for Queenslanders. People in North Queensland are entitled to the same quality of health care as other Australians, not second-rate care led by pharmacists masquerading as doctors.

“This plan will only mean higher healthcare costs and poorer outcomes for patients. It is time for all Governments at state and federal level to work together to strengthen and support general practice as part of the proven medical home model of care, where GPs work collaboratively with other health professionals to put patients first,” said Dr Khorshid.

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