

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**North Queensland doctors condemn pharmacy trial at AMA Town Hall**

Doctors from north Queensland have supported a motion condemning a pharmacy prescribing trial as dangerous and called on the Queensland Government to abandon it in favour of working on sustainable, safe solutions for patients.

More than 100 doctors registered to attend an AMA Emergency Town Hall meeting late this week, demonstrating the grave concerns local doctors have about the proposed trial.

AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid told attendees the proposed trial would put patients' lives at risk and would undermine the critical role of General Practice.

“The trial, which would allow pharmacists to diagnose and prescribe drugs for 23 conditions including type 2 diabetes and heart conditions, will put patients at risk and undermines the critical role of general practice in our health system,” Dr Khorshid said.

“The North Queensland Pharmacy Prescribing Program is due to commence any day now despite strong protests from our profession and known reservations of many in the pharmacy industry.

“This dangerous experiment removes the critical separation between prescribing and dispensing, putting pharmacy profits before patients. It puts patients and pharmacists themselves at risk by asking pharmacists to do a doctor’s job, but without any medical training. Pharmacists are among the poorest paid healthcare workers in our community and this trial will put them under extraordinary pressure.

“Doctors respect the considerable skills pharmacists bring to the care of patients. They are experts in medications and medication management and there is no doubt that they can contribute more to the delivery of health care in this country.

“Healthcare workers function best when they are part of a collaborative team and in our primary care sector that’s a team coordinated by a GP and informed by medical diagnosis,” Dr Khorshid said.

Dr Khorshid said the trial will encourage patients to choose convenience over quality, fragmenting their care and it is likely the trial will increase rather than decrease the pressure on emergency departments. It would also send a message to all GPs that their work is not valued by the Queensland Government.

Other speakers highlighted the disproportionate impact pharmacy prescribing will have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Dr Jason King, Director of Clinical Services, Gurriny Yealamucka Health Services Aboriginal Corporation, told the meeting the trial could have “lasting and damaging effects” in those communities.

Attendees supported a motion that:

- condemns the proposed North Queensland Pharmacy Pilot as a dangerous experiment that will deliver lower quality care for patients; and
- calls on the Queensland Government to abandon the Pilot and to instead work collaboratively with GP groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and other health professions to deliver collaborative and sustainable solutions that will genuinely improve access to high quality care for patients.

Dr Khorshid was joined on the panel at the Town Hall by:

- AMA Queensland President Dr Maria Boulton
- Dr Bruce Willett, RACGP QLD Faculty Chair, RACGP Vice President
- Dr Jason King, Director of Clinical Services, Gurriny Yealamucka Health Services Aboriginal Corporation
- Dr Kim Hansen, Chair of the AMA Queensland Ramping Roundtable
- Dr Lee Jones, North Queensland Doctors Guild, GP Representative AMA Queensland Council.

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