

National President's Foreword

Community pharmacy is poised at a unique moment in time. The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (the Guild) and the Federal Government have recently signed the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement (Fifth Agreement). The Federal Government has released its broad approach for the new health system after analysing many reviews it commissioned. In addition to this, the Guild continues to initiate privately funded programs that will advance the role of the pharmacist as part of the new health system. While community pharmacy is always evolving, it is now well positioned to further enhance service provision to consumers.

The 'Roadmap –The Strategic Direction for Community Pharmacy' (Roadmap) provides pharmacists and industry representatives with an understanding of the Guild's vision for pharmacy's future. An Agreement negotiation always entails a preparatory period by the Guild where future goals are decided and strategy set. Indeed, every five years the Guild undertakes a major strategic review before these negotiations begin. With the Fifth Agreement now in place, it is important to explain more broadly the Guild's strategy.

Now is the time to plan and map out the future to maximise the community benefit delivered through our unique pharmacy network. The Guild proposes to boldly stake out the future for community pharmacy. Our vision brings together our strengths and aligns those strengths with the new direction of the health system - a health system where the patient is at the centre. Community pharmacies are located in most suburbs and every region, and pharmacists have always engaged with their communities. The evolving health system calls for community pharmacy to further extend its important primary health care role.

The Roadmap is intended to provide a mechanism by which community pharmacy can develop future services. It will be a flexible and 'living' document to ensure the evolution of pharmacy is accommodated. The Community Pharmacy Agreements, undertaken under the leadership of the Guild, have allowed pharmacy to evolve significantly since the First Agreement was signed 20 years ago. The Guild does not wait for government programs and funding from third parties. Instead, the Guild continually invests its own resources in the future of community pharmacy, ensuring that the profession develops and remains relevant to the consumer. No other professional health organisation invests as much in its profession's future as the Guild.

A focus for the Guild will be to develop a wider scope of national pharmacy programs. The Federal Government is particularly interested in national programs that are delivered in all regions of Australia, thereby satisfying community needs as comprehensively as possible. Some future programs may involve fewer pharmacies, which may be undertaken more appropriately by specially accredited pharmacists, either through selected community pharmacies or separate from them.

In considering new programs, it is important to keep in mind the key strengths of community pharmacy - accessibility and a high level of community trust. Patients have easy access to a pharmacist, who can be engaged without appointment simply by walking into the pharmacy. Patients trust their pharmacist and with ever increasing concerns about privacy, pharmacists are an important link in the health system. These competitive advantages must be maintained and built upon.

As we move forward the health system will demand greater coordination. The recent focus of the Guild has been coordination within community pharmacy. It now becomes a priority, particularly with regard to health records, to increase collaboration with other health professionals. Information technology will facilitate this process.

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Pharmacy must know its limitations and also understand the financial and other constraints faced by governments and the imperatives that drive them. Governments will be under growing pressure from an increasingly knowledgeable and sophisticated public, who will demand more and better resources for health care and higher standards within the health system. There will always be cost pressures on central agencies and they, in turn, will seek more efficient use of health resources.

Changes to a health system must be considered in a political framework. That is why strong advocacy has been, and always will be, a focus for the Guild. The Guild, however, aims to seek and provide solutions for government and the community, not to create problems for them, and this will continue to be the Guild's focus.

Community pharmacy is a unique private-public partnership. Significant taxpayer funds are invested in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and the community pharmacy network, in partnership with government, distributes PBS medicines in an equitable and timely manner to the Australian public. Over time new programs and services have been developed that complement the medicines expertise of the pharmacist. The network of around 5000 privately owned pharmacies provides a very effective infrastructure platform, unparalleled in any other part of the health system. It is the view

of the Guild that this network is under-utilised by governments at all levels and also by other elements of the health system. This report will assist to identify opportunities for improved utilisation of the community pharmacy network.

With regard to the operation of community pharmacy in the future and the programs being put forward in the Roadmap, consideration will need to be given to environmental factors, and guidelines developed as to how pharmacies can contain their 'carbon footprint'.

The Roadmap is now documented- it is a living document. From this point the main task is to implement the plan.

All plans start with good intentions. Sometimes, through lack of political will, inconsistent application, inadequate resources, insufficient planning, lack of consideration of the need for change management and/or an inability to 'sell' the vision, such plans fall short of realisation. The Guild is determined to see this plan through to implementation and will invest its own considerable resources to ensure that this happens.

The Guild invites you to partner with us in this exciting future.

