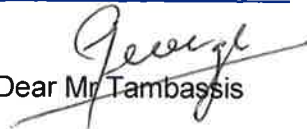


Mr George Tambassis  
National President  
Pharmacy Guild of Australia  
[guild.nat@guild.org.au](mailto:guild.nat@guild.org.au)

  
Dear Mr Tambassis

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of The Nationals on important issues raised by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in relation to rural and regional pharmacy. A response to these issues is attached.

This election will have real consequences for regional Australia and the nation's economy and our future.

Despite global headwinds, our economy is strong. This year, for the first time in more than a decade, the Government will deliver a Budget surplus.

We know the potential of regional Australia, our people and communities. That's why The Nationals fight for your fair share.

By working together, we're putting locals first to build a stronger regional Australia.

We are putting locals first to deliver:

- Relief for household pressures;
- Secure local jobs and better wages;
- Quality local healthcare and education choices;
- Local roads, transport & infrastructure that works;
- Safer regional communities;
- Protecting our local way of life for future generations.

We can do all of this because of a strong economy.

The alternative at this election is Mr Shorten. Labor's risky agenda includes \$387 billion of higher taxes – on retirees, housing, incomes, investments, family businesses and electricity.

Yours sincerely

  
**Ben Hindmarsh**  
Campaign Director





## LIBERAL AND NATIONALS GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE PHARMACY GUILD OF AUSTRALIA – KEY ISSUES FOR RURAL AND REMOTE PHARMACY

Commitment to regional, rural and remote Australia

The Liberal National Government is committed to equity in healthcare for all Australians.

People living in rural and regional Australia deserve the same access to high-quality healthcare services as those living in capital cities.

That is why we announced the landmark **Stronger Rural Health Strategy** in 2018. We are now implementing this most comprehensive rural health package in decades, investing \$550 million that delivers 3,000 additional doctors and more than 3,000 additional nurses and allied health professionals in rural general practice over the next decade.

Under the Liberal and National Government, those living in rural and regional Australia now have greater access to services including through new regional cancer centres, expanded telehealth services, regional clinical trial centres and increased opportunities for Australia's rural and regional health workforce.

### Support for pharmacists

The Liberal National Government recognises the important role that pharmacists and pharmacies play in our health system especially in regional area. The Government is committed to supporting pharmacies across Australia in providing consumer access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines and effective health care services

The *Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement* (6CPA) between the Australian Government and the Pharmacy Guild provides approximately \$18.9 billion to over 5000 community pharmacies for dispensing PBS medicines, providing pharmacy programs and services and for the Community Service Obligation arrangements with pharmaceutical wholesalers.

There are numerous programs to support pharmacists so they can best serve those living in regional, rural and remote areas.

These include:

- **Professional Education Allowance** is designed to strengthen and support the rural pharmacy workforce, in turn to provide increased access to quality pharmacy services for consumers residing in rural and remote regions of Australia. It provides financial support to assist pharmacists from rural and remote areas to access CPE and other Professional Development activities.
- **Emergency Locum Service** provides support to pharmacists in rural and remote areas through direct access to locums in emergency situations such as illness, bereavement, or family emergencies. The service provides 24 hour a day, seven day a week telephone access and up to \$2,500 to fund the travel costs of the locum. The service aims to place a locum in any location in Australia within 24 hours for a maximum of 7 days.
- The **Intern Incentive Allowance for Rural Pharmacists** aims to increase and support the rural and remote pharmacy workforce by encouraging pharmacists to practice in rural and remote areas. Under the **Intern Incentive Allowance for Rural Pharmacies – Extension Program** provides funding to enable community pharmacies in rural areas to retain a newly registered pharmacist beyond the initial intern period.
- The **Rural Intern Training Allowance** (RITA) provides financial support to assist intern pharmacists from rural and remote areas to access compulsory intern training program activities.

- The **Rural Pharmacy Liaison Officer (RPLO)** implements local level projects that support practising rural community pharmacies and pharmacy students undertaking placements in rural areas. RPLOs promote intra-professional collaboration with pharmacies, pharmacists, pharmacy students and universities, and facilitate professional development and networking opportunities for pharmacies, pharmacists and pharmacy students.
- The **Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance (RPMA)** is a monthly allowance paid to eligible proprietors of section 90 approved pharmacies. The allowance recognises the additional financial burden of maintaining a pharmacy in rural and remote areas of Australia.
- The **Rural Pharmacy Scholarship Scheme** provides financial support to encourage and enable students from rural and remote communities to undertake undergraduate or graduate studies in pharmacy at university. Up to 30 scholarships are offered annually, with a value of \$10,000 per annum per student. Scholarship recipients are encouraged to seek employment in rural and remote areas following graduation.
- The Rural Pharmacy Scholarship Scheme is supplemented by the **Rural Pharmacy Scholarship Mentor Scheme** which reinforces the scholarship holder's ties to rural and regional Australia and provides support to those outside of the university and formal study environment. Rural Pharmacy Mentors support involves at least quarterly contact, such as via email, telephone or face-to-face sessions as instigated by the scholar. Rural Pharmacy Mentors will be paid an honorarium of \$375 (GST exclusive) each year for participating in the Scheme.
- The **Rural Pharmacy Student Placement Allowance** provides financial support to encourage and enable pharmacy programs at Australian Universities to deliver student placements in rural and remote communities. The allowance assists with the travel and accommodation costs associated with undertaking a placement in a rural or remote area. The **Administrative Support to Pharmacy Schools** component of the allowance is for Pharmacy Schools to maintain the administration of the program.

## Telehealth

Concerning telehealth the recent 2019-20 Budget announced additional telehealth primary care services.

This included additional telehealth services for people on flood affected areas – by a new time limited Medicare Benefits Schedule items for telehealth service – so that from November 2019 all people in rural and remote areas are able to access GP services via telehealth general consultations – cost \$33.5m over 4 years.

Further, the Government is providing \$9.1 million over four years to remove barriers to telehealth through enabling better access to psychological services in rural and regional Australia via a range of telehealth delivery channels.

National Rural Health Commissioner and Allied Health

The Government has asked the National Rural Health Commissioner to focus his next report on the quality, distribution and access to allied health services in rural and remote Australia, and will impact on the pharmacy profession. An elected Liberal National Party Government will respond to the Commissioner's report due later this year.

## Tertiary Education

Although universities are autonomous organisations and can enrol the number of students they want, in the courses they deem desirable the Liberal National parties believe that you should be able to attend university whether you are from a regional community or from a

capital city. Young Australians from regional areas are around half as likely to have a university qualification or higher-level VET qualification by their mid-twenties.

Consequently, the Liberal Nationals Government has increased investment in medical and allied health professions in recent years, including through the expansion of training pathways. Our medical workforce review and subsequent investment in regional medical and allied health provision has been focussed on providing opportunities for students in rural and regional Australia to ensure they can serve their regional communities. This is in addition to the ongoing regional loading support provided by the Liberal National Government to regional campuses to assist with the costs of operating regionally.

The income-contingent loans scheme introduced by Labor in 1989 ensures that rural and regional students do not have to pay for their tuition upfront and a portion of tuition costs that the taxpayer funds are only repaid by the student once they can afford to do so through the tax system once they are earning. The Liberal Nationals Government took a fair and considered package of higher education reforms to Parliament in 2017 after two years' consultation. Those reforms included extending the clinical loading beyond medicine. Unfortunately, Labor and the Greens blocked those reforms.

Providing training opportunities for students in rural and regional Australia is exactly what this Government has been doing and from next year we will be holding universities to account for the record funding they receive through performance-contingent funding. We expect universities to serve their communities by training local students and ensuring the workforce needs of regional communities are met.

The Liberal National Government has made numerous other initiatives to support students in regional and rural Australia including:

- \$490 million to ensure students can attend university no matter where they live through a range of measures since the last election, including through 3,155 **Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships**. These support students with the costs of studying at university or at a vocational education and training provider;
- introduced up to 4,720 new **tertiary scholarships** to attract Australian and international students to study in regional Australia;
- to alleviate the costs of moving to study on rural and regional students the Government has established **Regional Study Hubs** in 22 locations to allow regional students to study in communities near them;
- invested \$152 million in 2016 for a **Regional Student Access to Education Package** that improves access to *Youth Allowance* and *ABSTUDY* living allowance for regional and remote students, and more support for isolated children's education;
- provided over \$1.6 billion in base funding in 2017 for Commonwealth supported students at regionally headquartered universities and \$70 million each year in regional loading to help universities maintain regional campuses.

A Liberal National Government will implement the findings of the recent *Napthine Review into Rural, Regional and Remote Education* to develop Australia's first Rural, Regional and Remote Education Strategy.

### **Culturally safe services**

The Liberal National Government will continue to make progress towards *Closing the Gap* in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. Funding of \$4.1 billion over the next four years will improve access to health care through the **Indigenous Australians' Health Program**.

To better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities it is important for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacists to work in the industry. The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Scholarship Scheme** encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake undergraduate or graduate studies in pharmacy at university.

Further, the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistant Traineeship Scheme** supports the community pharmacy workforce by encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enter pharmacy assistant roles. It will increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacy assistants in community pharmacies and establish alternative pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students to enter into the profession. Incentive allowances of \$10,000 are available to community pharmacies to employ and train an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistant Trainee.