



DR RICHARD DI NATALE

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Senator for Victoria

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Mr George Tambassis
President
The Pharmacy Guild
Level 2, Pharmacy Guild House
15 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

via email: guild.nat@guild.org.au

25 May 2015

Dear Mr Tambassis,

The Australian Greens are strong supporters of community pharmacy. We recognise and value the role of pharmacists in Australia's health system, from acute care right through to prevention. The Greens have long championed the greater harnessing of skills and experience of pharmacists beyond dispensing, for example in assisting the one in five Australians over 65 who are now living with multiple chronic disease.

The Greens believe that spending on health is an investment and that as a wealthy country, we are lucky to have the resources required to ensure that Australians have access to the essential treatments and procedures they need to live a healthy life. Of course we should work hard to ensure our health system is efficient and that we get value for the money we spend, but we need to move past viewing health spending as a crisis, and look at the opportunities.

The Greens believe Pharmacy is a key element of that. The Greens believe that the tendency for the debate to focus around the contribution of GPs and hospitals on reforming the system misses an opportunities for pharmacy to be engaged more, drawing on their experience and their linkages with the community, to drive better health outcomes.

Pharmacists are highly trusted members of the community. The broader community is calling for pharmacies to provide greater service to patients and the Greens are supportive of that. We are particularly interested in the roll out of the Pharmacy Trial Program and the trials which will seek to expand the role of pharmacy in delivering a wider range of primary healthcare services to patients. The Australian Greens are committed to a focus on early intervention and screening, and I am particularly pleased to see a focus on these elements in the program. The Greens are committed to drug law reform and harm minimisation policy, and recognise that pharmacists are often on the front line. I applaud the Guild's commitment to reducing the social and economic costs of drug abuse in Australia and your work through the Methadone maintenance programs. We would hope to see more pharmacies engaged in these programs.

The Greens also believe pharmacists will also be critical in the response to the significant harm caused by abuse of prescription medicines. With Benzodiazepines, including sleeping pills and common medications for anxiety, claiming more lives than either illicit drugs or alcohol, this is an issue which requires urgent attention from federal and state governments, in collaboration with pharmacists, doctors and the pharmaceutical industry.



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The Greens recognise the benefit to community pharmacy businesses of having certainty through five-year community pharmacy agreements. We are concerned that greater transparency in the negotiations with government be achieved.

The Greens are committed to closing the gap in the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and are strong supporters of the role of community pharmacy in ensuring equitable access to medicines under the PBS through the QUMAX program which addresses cultural, transport and other barriers.

Finally, I am pleased that the Green's advocacy on medicinal cannabis is beginning to bear fruit, with early moves towards a regulatory framework. We will continue to advocate for access for patients to medicinal cannabis, and for pharmacists to be involved in the development of policy, protocols and guidelines for its use and dispensing. I am grateful for the strong and constructive relationship between the Australian Greens and the Pharmacy Guild, and look forward to building on this to amplify the voice of community pharmacy in broader health reform.

Yours Sincerely,

Senator Richard Di Natale
Leader of the Australian Greens & Senator for Victoria



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