



Kevin Rudd MP
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Dear Pharmacist,

Federal Labor believes that the system of community pharmacy in Australia is a great strength of our health system. Pharmacists play a very important role as health professionals in the community. A Rudd Labor Government will recognise that role and continue to support the work of pharmacists in our communities.

There are about 15,000 pharmacists in Australia and around 5,000 community pharmacies around the country. Pharmacists consistently rate as one of the most trusted and accessible groups of health professionals in the country.

Federal Labor recognises that positive steps have been taken to cement the role of pharmacists in our communities. We will continue the Agreement process begun by the Hawke Government, and honour the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement reached between the Government and the Pharmacy Guild. We will also continue the arrangements for pharmacists that were included in this year's PBS reform package.

We are especially keen to see the kind of chronic disease initiatives supported by the current Agreement continue to develop into the future.

Labor believes community pharmacies, in consultation with GPs and other health professionals, will continue to play a significant role in the health system, perhaps even more so as part of a heavier emphasis on frontline preventative care in the future. We support the current system of community pharmacy as the best means to achieve a well-distributed network of community-based pharmacies with a focus on professional health care.

Federal Labor does not support changing the current pharmacy ownership rules. Labor does not support pharmacies being established in supermarkets. We believe the important role that pharmacists play as health care professionals in the community would be diminished by allowing supermarket chains to operate in-house pharmacies.

The role of pharmacists is often undervalued. In fact, pharmacists have always played an important role as health care providers and this will continue in the future, particularly with the challenges of an ageing population and higher rates of chronic disease. The regular contact that

pharmacists have with their customers can provide a useful opportunity to provide health advice and information.

Federal Labor wants to work with pharmacists to enhance and support the crucial role that can be played (and in many cases already is being played) in providing services in the community that can help keep people well and keep them out of hospital.

Pharmacists, for example, can help play a very important role in helping people to manage their medication when they leave hospital. Federal Labor is keen to work with pharmacists to explore the possibility of initiatives to improve continuity of care in this area. This is in line with the aims of our \$2 billion National Health and Hospitals Reform Plan, including keeping people well and out of hospital.

Federal Labor also recognises the willingness of pharmacists to work with government to achieve important community outcomes including:

- Negotiation of PBS reform
- Rapid take-up of PBS online
- Development and rollout of Project Stop
- Participation by pharmacists in the management of diabetes, asthma, and other chronic diseases

We hope that pharmacists will continue to have this input in a Rudd Labor Government.

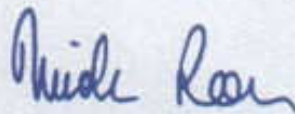
Finally, Federal Labor realises that pharmacists have faced substantial instability over recent years, in the face of several reviews and industry restructuring. While these reviews have often delivered positive change, we recognise that pharmacists need more certainty in the immediate future to allow them to build on the progress made so far and ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

A Rudd Labor Government will work with pharmacists to tackle the health challenges that confront Australia, and to deliver the improved health care that working families around the country need and deserve.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Rudd
Federal Labor Leader
Member for Griffith



Nicola Roxon
Shadow Minister for Health
Member for Gellibrand