

Reference number CR151

Contact name
Jennifer Callaghan
Is your submission confidential?
No
Submission type
Have Your Say
Are there unwarranted regulatory impediments to competition in any sector in Australia that should be removed or altered?
<p>The restriction on the number and location of retail pharmacies does not allow active competition especially that of quality professional services. There is , to my knowledge, no other profession that is restricted in such a manner. There is plenty of competition using price.</p> <p>When I qualified as a pharmacist in 1969 a qualified pharmacist could open a retail establishment in any location and their success was solely determined by consumer demand/satisfaction. This is not the case now.</p> <p>The influence and lobby from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (peak body for retail pharmacy owners, who are mostly men) , supported by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (although membership not restricted solely to owners of pharmacies is dominated by male owners) based on the spurious argument that restricting the number of retail outlets would reduce the number of prescriptions dispensed and hence cost to government (and not born out by the reality) has allowed this situation to continue.</p> <p>An added reason competition is effectively restricted is that in many areas all the pharmacies are owned by the same people/person and as no other can open there is no competition EITHER on price or level of professional service.</p>
Are government-provided goods and services delivered in a manner conducive to competition, while meeting other policy objectives?
No
Is there a need for further competition-related reform in infrastructure sectors with a history of heavy government involvement (such as the water, energy and transport sectors)?
See above
Would there be a public benefit in encouraging greater competition and choice in sectors with substantial government participation (including education, health and disability care and support)?
<p>yes, greater quality of service provided at no extra cost to government. Government pays for the total number of PBS scripts dispensed per year- the cost remains the same irrespective of the number of pharmacies that dispense the scripts.</p> <p>The quality of professional service offered by the current retail pharmacies is very poor. There is little contact between pharmacist and consumer. Pharmacists are paid by the government to discuss prescriptions with consumers at the dispensing of every prescription but this rarely happens.</p> <p>If a motivated professional pharmacist feels they can offer a better service than another in an area they should be permitted to open a pharmacy where ever they want. Let the consumer have the choice of level of service. At present, due to restrictions, if a pharmacy offers poor service many consumers may not have the ability to travel to an alternative. As mentioned above all the pharmacies within easy acces of some consumers may be owned by the same people/person.</p>
Are the current competition laws working effectively to promote competitive markets, given increasing globalisation, changing market and social structures, and technological change?
No, see above
What institutional arrangements would best support a self-sustaining process for continual competition policy reform and review?
Removal or the restriction of pharmacy numbers and location.

