

Premier's new pharmacy rules place politics above patients

Doctors are urging the Palaszczuk Government to stop playing politics with women's health in a blatant bid to win votes at this year's State election.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said rule changes that allow pharmacists to provide women with the contraceptive pill and antibiotics for urinary tract infections (UTI) without a prescription were a cynical attempt to buy the female vote.

"Women can already get a month's supply of the oral contraceptive pill without a prescription," Dr Dhupelia said. "Under the new changes, most women will now be forced to buy four months of the pill because that is how many oral contraceptives are packaged at pharmacies.

"These changes are more about bowing to pressure for profits from the pharmacy sector than improving women's health care."

Dr Dhupelia also said it was irresponsible of the State Government to allow pharmacies to provide antibiotics when the rise of antibiotic-resistant super germs was one of the greatest public health threats of our time.

"This move works against all the national strategies that have been put in place in recent years to help control the growing threat of antibiotic-resistant superbugs," he said.

"More than 700,000 people die every year around the world because of infections that are resistant to antibiotics¹. We need people taking less antibiotics, not more."

Dr Dhupelia said the State Queensland's changes disregarded national pharmacy considerations underway by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPCC) and a recommendation of the Therapeutic Goods Administrations Independent Advisory Committee on Scheduling.

"No other state or territory has taken this action," Dr Dhupelia said. "It's hard to view the Premier's announcement – made on International Women's Day – as anything but a blatant grab for votes at the expense of women's health.

"GPs are right to be concerned. We must never place politics ahead of public health."

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¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-04-2019-new-report-calls-for-urgent-action-to-avert-antimicrobial-resistance-crisis>