

Lucy Walker

Pharmacy of the Year 2017 winner and owner of Lucy Walker Chemmart, Goondiwindi, Queensland.

Pharmacy Connect is a national conference and trade show hosted by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. It will be held on September 1-3 at the Hilton Sydney. The conference will feature workshops beforehand, a two-day education program and a 60-stand trade exhibition.



It must be a huge thrill to have won Pharmacy of the Year.

LW: We have been thrilled with our big win and have been celebrating with our staff, community, family, and friends. This was so unexpected and, seeing the other finalists, we thought they would win. I didn't even have an acceptance speech ready.

What set you apart from your competitors?

LW: Our town, Goondiwindi [350km south-west of Brisbane on the Queensland-NSW border], set us apart. We already have a really good health community, with our doctors and the allied health professionals all working well together. Our community is already engaged with us and we're engaged with them.

The judges were impressed that we have good relationships with everyone in our community. Doctors would come into the shop and talk to us. The regional council members come in for their flu shots. The director of nursing of the hospital discusses better management with us. We have worked at it. We would have lunch at the doctors and talk to them about our health services. If a new specialist comes to town, we make sure we would introduce ourselves and work out how we can all work together. This is something we're quite proud of, but it's just not us alone, it's the whole town, we all try to work together to help our community.

Tell us about your journey to pharmacy ownership in Goondiwindi.

LW: I was brought up in Brisbane and studied at the university there. I also managed a store before going overseas, travelling as a pharmacist. I worked in the UK and I came back and worked at Brisbane's large, Princess



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Alexandra Hospital, while also doing my clinical diploma in pharmacy.

Then I met a lovely country boy at the picnic races at Goondiwindi and, after a long-distance relationship, I thought I would try living there for a while. I worked at the Lee's Pharmacy in Goondiwindi, did some academic detailing and worked for Health Force Queensland as well.

It wasn't until I was married and my son was three months old that my pharmacy owner, Bill Hallo, offered to sell me the pharmacy in 2011. I couldn't miss the opportunity.

What do you believe are some of the key elements of a successful pharmacy?

LW: Having a great team so even when it's frantically busy, the staff are still smiling and talking to people. The team work hard, know what's going on and I happily trust them to look after everything. Having a health-services focus is also important. Having lots of pharmacists available, like today with three pharmacists and an intern on, people can come to talk to our pharmacists as they need to. Listening to your customers needs and responding to them.

What do you believe are some of the key elements of a great owner/manager?

LW: Be a good communicator, which means being honest and giving clear directions on what we want to achieve and conveying it to the team. Leading by example and delegating to others.

All the finalists for Pharmacy of the Year were led by women. What advice would you give to women who want to move towards pharmacy ownership?

LW: I've always believed in pharmacy ownership and I would strongly encourage it. Women make great pharmacist owners as we have some good skill sets. We are better at delegating and bring another aspect of caring to the mix. And I think women should be able to work around parenthood. I have two young children and, yes, it's a juggle, but I would never regret having that challenge. Parenting is not an either-or option, you can do both.

Women struggle to take up leadership roles. What can you say to encourage them?

LW: My attitude is you never regret the things you do, only the things you don't. So, quite often when I decide to say yes to something, I ask myself if it's something I really want to do. I then just try and make it happen. I always try and go for the opportunities, as you don't know what's going to happen in the future.

If you had few minutes in a lift with the Prime Minister and were given an opportunity to explain the value of community pharmacy, what would you say?

LW: I would ask him to come and watch us in the pharmacy and see what we do and how we help our customers. He should know that we save the Government and its health expenditure so much money by offering all that free advice, and we help the most marginal. I would want to tell them how some of the paperwork and reporting can really slow down our daily business. I would really like to show him the value of a pharmacist and say, 'Come watch us and work in our lives for a day and experience the warm, fuzzy moments'.

Finally, what are your short-term goals for you and your pharmacy?

LW: We're converting to TerryWhite Chemmart soon and getting a robot installed. I was just in Brisbane talking to designers to better utilise our store. So, we certainly aren't sitting around after our big win. We're getting on with a major refit, which is our focus for the next few months. ^{RP}