

Pharmaceutical Defence Limited

The story of Pharmaceutical Defence Limited's—PDL's—formation is interesting. It followed the British example of the Chemists' Defence Association, formed in 1901. The impetus to form PDL in Australia followed a court case against a chemist in Echuca, called Francis Gough, who was sued for damages by a farmer, William Hilton, following an alleged poisoning in 1911. Despite “some unsatisfactory aspects of the case”, Greg Haines recorded it:

“Hilton, who claimed damages of £2000 won the case and was awarded the considerable sum of £200 damages, plus costs, which would have ruined Gough. Chemists, realising their vulnerability, were alarmed. Any alleged dispensing error, real or not, whether originating with the prescriber or the dispenser, could bring down the most careful chemist. Pharmaceutical Defence Ltd was set up to allow chemists to take out insurance against such happenings. In its origins, PDL also allowed the efficient and pushy Charles Butchers to stride to the centre of the pharmaceutical stage.”ⁱ

Butchers raised the money for Gough by June of that year; by September, together with Buckhurst, they had formed PDL—which exists to this day.

When Buckhurst died in August 1929 his position of chair was taken by the then vice chair Duncan Rankin, a foundation member of the company and a member of the directorate since 1912. Rankin qualified as a pharmacist in 1883 and served a term as president of the council of the Pharmaceutical Society in Victoria.

In Sydney, HDB Cox was also actively involved in the 1930s as chairman of PDL in New South Wales replacing his friend Sydney Mears who was a leading light until he died suddenly in 1913. Another person who served PDL for many years in NSW was Secretary Les Thompson, a senior partner in the well-known firm of chartered accountants Holt and Thompson in Sydney. Thompson had been secretary of the Master Pharmacists Association and the Pharmaceutical Society of New South Wales. Even though he caused trouble in the early days, he subsequently became state branch secretary of the Guild when it superseded the MPA. PDL was fortunate to have a secretary in New South Wales who was an authority on company law and accounting procedures.

In Queensland, George Ward was chair of PDL. He was born in Queen Street in Brisbane in the residence behind his father's pharmacy and dispatched to Tasmania to be educated at the Hutchins School, where he became a champion athlete.

From 1 October 1963, PDL chair Ernest Braithwaite told members the company had severed its long-standing agreement with Amalgamated Insurance (Aust) Ltd. Chemists Indemnity Insurances would be entrusted to the Guild Insurance Company, which had completed an association with Forsaith Bucknell and Liggins Pty Ltd—a well-known firm of insurance brokers. Braithwaite said he was setting in motion machinery “that will over a period of years bring the chemists' own insurance company to a position of strength and independence... The present mood by the leaders in pharmacy is not so much an adventure as the taking of a calculated risk based on the favourable insurance experience of chemists.”ⁱⁱ

Today, PDL remains separate from, and independent of, both the Guild and the PSA but assists a number of pharmacy ventures each year. These include conferences such as the PSA Offshore Educational Conference, The Australian Pharmacy Professional, the Pharmacy Australia Congress, the Women's Congress and pharmacy networking functions, dinners, luncheons and breakfasts, and trade fairs. PDL also assists students through support of the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) and sponsors student prizes and young pharmacy leaders as well as training and research projects. In recent years PDL has been a major sponsor of Guild Negotiation Team Training in the lead up to negotiation of the five year Agreements with the federal government. Its current overseer is John Coppock, the careful, measured chair of PDL.

Source: Greenwood, Stephen G, *Ready, prepared! The history of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia from 1928 to 2008*. Sydney: Australian Pharmaceutical Publishing Company Ltd, 2008, pp.15–16.

ⁱ Haines, G. *The grains and three penn'orths of pharmacy: pharmacy in New South Wales 1788–1976*. Lowden Publishing, 1976, p.206.

ⁱⁱ Mr E. W. Braithwaite (chair of PDL). Quoted in *Australasian Journal of Pharmacy*, 30 August 1963, p.707.