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TELSTRA INVESTMENT IN FRED IT GROUP UNDERPINS CONTINUED IT INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP FOR PHARMACY

Telstra, through its new health portfolio, has become a major investor in the Fred IT Group, Australia's leading provider of IT services to pharmacy.

Fred IT Group CEO and pharmacist Paul Naismith, said "This new strategic partnership with Telstra underpins Fred's core commitment to providing IT innovation and leadership for pharmacy and pharmacy customers over the long term. It allows us to continue to invest strongly in eHealth and cloud computing which are vital in improving patient health and safety, creating new ways for pharmacy to service its customers and run its business. Our commitment to, and focus on, pharmacy remains our absolute priority."

Telstra's Head of Health, Shane Solomon said the investment was part of Telstra's ongoing focus on building capability in the health sector.

"Our health strategy aims to transform how Australians experience health services by improving efficiency, convenience, quality, and co-ordination of care."

"Community pharmacies play a vital role in providing services and advice to millions of Australians and Fred IT Group is at the leading edge of companies offering eHealth solutions to the community, GP's and pharmacists."

"Fred has embraced eHealth solutions to offer safer, more efficient and more convenient service to the community and their GPs and pharmacists. We are looking forward to providing the support which will facilitate further growth in this area," Mr Solomon said.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, which retains its investment in Fred, sees this new partnership with Telstra as opening further opportunities for exploring national ICT initiatives that can improve access to health care, as National Guild President, Kos Sclavos, describes, "The Fred IT Group's partnership with Telstra reflects the health system's adaptation to meet the needs of a modern connected society. It means that we can explore national opportunities where pharmacists have a role, with other key health professionals, in improving health throughout the community."

Mr Sclavos said "This partnership acknowledges the importance of pharmacists in the future of health, across the spectrum of medicine management and compliance and health records, including the cornerstone of effective health records, the medication history."

"I have confidence that Fred's high level of service, and knowledge that are the unique characteristics of modern community pharmacy businesses will be maintained in the new partnership. Service to pharmacists and the benefit to their patients will continue to be the absolute priority of the Fred IT Group," Mr Sclavos said.

Since the launch of Fred in 1993 to create pharmacy-friendly dispensing software, it has grown from its original staff of 2 to a team of 200 and has consistently explored new ways that IT can help pharmacy improve the way it does business, improve patient health and safety, and create a more viable pharmacy environment. Leadership in eHealth initiatives, such as eRx Script Exchange, increasing infrastructure for national medication records, and exploring new initiatives such as eRx Express have been part of this focus.

Mr Naismith said "Fred's products, services and support to pharmacy will continue to be delivered by the same passionate team with the same focus on finding the most efficient, competitive solutions for pharmacy."

"As we head into our 21st year, Fred is embarking on a new chapter of growth and opportunity, strengthened by our Telstra-Guild-Fred partnership and a shared vision of the role of eHealth innovation in delivering better health care nationally." said Mr Naismith.

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About Fred IT Group

Fred IT Group is Australia's leading provider of IT services to pharmacy with more than 3,000 pharmacies using Fred's market leading solutions which include Fred Dispense, Fred Office and Fred Net broadband. Fred innovations such as eRx Script Exchange, Australia's first and largest national electronic prescriptions exchange, connect more than 15,500 doctors and 3,900 pharmacies to improve patient safety and dispensing efficiency. The eRx Script Exchange extensive network allows Fred to advance medication focussed eHealth initiatives to lower risk and improve patients' medication outcomes.