



ABN: 15 814 376 015  
Registration no: A0054169K

30 August 2016

## **Submission to the Review Panel of Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation from the Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS)**

### **Recommendations**

- *PSS recommends that the Review takes into account the mental health and well-being of practitioners of the pharmacy profession who serve the Australian community as integral to pharmacy remuneration and regulation.*
- *PSS recommends that the Review considers the public need for access to an accessible, country wide network of sustainable pharmacies to benefit our health system and that this is achieved through a healthy and productive pharmacy workforce.*
- *PSS recommends that pharmacy services require economic viability, with appropriate remuneration for employer and employee pharmacists reflective of their expertise as registered health professionals.*

### **Vision statement of the Pharmacists' Support Service**

To provide an independent source of support for the mental wellbeing of the Australian pharmacy profession for the benefit of the Australian public.

### **Background**

- PSS was formed in Victoria in 1995, subsequent to prompting by the then Victorian Doctor's Health Advisory Service (now the Victorian Doctor's Health Program).
- PSS is a not-for-profit organisation, an incorporated association and holds deductible gift recipient status.
- PSS provides support for all Australian pharmacists, pharmacy interns and pharmacy students.
- The service is offered primarily through trained volunteer pharmacists and retired pharmacists via a telephone helpline. The helpline is available 365 days of the year between 8am and 11pm. Calls are confidential and callers are encouraged to remain anonymous.
- The service currently receives 3 calls per week, increasing annually, from members of the pharmacy (including occasional calls from their colleagues, family or friends).
- PSS engages a part-time Executive Officer.

### **Funding of PSS**

PSS is funded by the pharmacy profession. Donations to cover the costs of the service are regularly received from member organisations (listed below) and from the broader pharmacy profession, individual donors and the pharmacy industry.

#### **Member organisations**

Australian Friendly Societies Pharmacies Association (AFSPA),  
National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) (observer status),  
Pharmaceutical Defence Ltd (PDL),

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA),  
Pharmaceutical Society of Victoria Ltd (PSV),  
Pharmacy Guild of Australia (PGA),  
Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA), and  
Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA).

Other Members of PSS

The volunteers who provide the service.

Issues impacting on the well-being of pharmacists

In order to understand how best to meet the needs of its callers, PSS evaluates the calls received by the service by collating statistics incidentally to calls. [Noting that callers are never asked specific questions in order to generate the data.]

The table below lists a summary of issues prompting pharmacists to call PSS (noting that each call is usually multifactorial) collated from calls received during a 12 month period (1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016):

Issue	Percentage (n=147)
Workplace issue	39%
Stress	37%
Legal issue	27%
Workplace relationships	19%
Seeking work	13%
Mental health	12%
Ethical dilemma	11%
Industrial relations	9%
Bullying	8%
Workload issue	8%
Dispensing error	7%
<b>Discussion of suicide/self-harm</b>	5%
Trauma	5%
Personal affairs	4%
Financial concerns	4%
Victim of crime	3%
Substance abuse	0.7%

Based on the caller's presentation 55% of callers are estimated to be under 30 years of age and 73% of callers were identified as being female.

It is important to note that these figures are based on 147 calls to PSS, and although PSS is the only organisation providing this type of service to pharmacists in Australia, it is likely that this is an underestimate and that pharmacists seek alternative sources of help through other support networks and through other services available to the broader Australia community. [Though many callers express comfort and ease in resolution of their concerns through dealing with a colleague.]

The figures above are evidence that pharmacists are currently at risk due to stress and workplace pressures. PSS is concerned that the pressure on pharmacists may increase in the future and that this review and its outcomes will impact further on the well-being of pharmacists, pharmacy interns and pharmacy students.

In order to ensure that the Australian public have continued access to a sound, safe and professionally functioning network of pharmacists it is essential that the review also considers the



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impact of the recommendations and outcomes of the review on individual practitioners and the broader profession.