

PHARMACIST REMUNERATION

Securing our pharmacist workforce for the future



DID YOU KNOW?

To many people, a pharmacist is someone who wears a white coat and works behind a counter filling our prescriptions and providing immunisations. **But pharmacists do a lot more than preparing and dispensing medicines!**

Pharmacists study for up to five years (including an intern year) to become medicines experts. Pharmacists work in pharmacies, hospitals, aged care, medical centres & other locations to get the best results from medicines while protecting people from harm.



As Australia's most accessible healthcare destination, **pharmacies have remained opened throughout the pandemic** to ensure that patients can continue to access essential medicines, non-urgent care and other services.

This has put Australia's pharmacists under immense pressure – with huge challenges including:

- Administering vaccinations
- Rapid Antigen Test shortages
- Medicine supply shortages
- Workforce shortages due to isolation
- Increasing incidence of violent and abusive behaviour from patients



These conditions are all contributing factors to the current workforce shortage, and the rate in which pharmacists are leaving the profession. **A crisis is looming, particularly as pharmacists continue to be significantly underpaid for their services.**

The **average wage** for early career pharmacists (those with less than 10 years' experience) is **\$66,955 (\$32.77 per hour)**, making them one of Australia's lowest remunerated, tertiary educated health professions.



Average pharmacist salaries in contrast with:

Health Sector		Other Countries		Other Professions	
General Practitioner	\$224,134	United States	\$170,514	HR Manager	\$114,636
Nurse Practitioner	\$125,258	Canada	\$113,335	Project Manager	\$112,474
Dentist	\$124,475	United Kingdom	\$88,437	Teacher	\$90,744
Optometrist	\$111,048	New Zealand	\$87,443	Electrician	\$86,970
Psychologist	\$90,698	Australia	\$80,943	Web Developer	\$85,860
Speech Pathologist	\$82,861			Pharmacists	\$80,943
Pharmacist	\$80,943				

Average base salary comparisons from au.indeed.com as at January 2022



Pharmacists are often paid less than other healthcare providers for providing the exact same services, or not paid at all. An example is **Multidisciplinary Case Conferencing**, where General Practitioners coordinate a team of allied health, home and community service providers to ensure their patient's care needs are being met.

Despite playing a key role in medicine safety, **pharmacists remain the *only* allied health provider who are *not* remunerated for their participation in case conferences**. Ensuring pharmacists' eligibility for case conferencing payments is crucial to connecting GPs, pharmacists and the broader multidisciplinary team.

The current **COVID-19 vaccination program** is another example of **pharmacists being paid less for the same service:**



	Pharmacists	GPs
First Dose	\$16	\$31.05
Second dose	\$26	\$34.45
Booster	\$26	\$34.45

GPs may also be able to claim a suitability assessment fee (\$39.10) for a total of **\$73.55**.

If all three doses are provided by the same practitioner in a major city, **a pharmacist would receive \$68, whilst a GP would receive \$139.05.**



Pharmacists have administered approximately 17% of all Commonwealth-administered COVID-19 vaccines. **By paying pharmacists substantially less than their GP counterparts, the government has shortchanged pharmacists by more than \$156 million.**

Our pharmacist workforce is reaching crisis point, with many who entered pharmacy with admirable intentions to help and care for our community, now questioning their future career prospects. **Failure to fairly remunerate these professionals will have dire consequences on Australia's healthcare system.**



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Pharmacists deserve the same pay as other healthcare providers for doing the same work. PSA calls on the incoming government to address the unfair and inequitable pay disparities between pharmacists and other healthcare providers by:

1. Introducing a MBS rebate for pharmacists to be remunerated for multidisciplinary case conferences.
2. Introducing a MBS service payment to pharmacists for administering National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccinations, including COVID-19 vaccines.

PSA also calls on the incoming government to commit to a binding agreement with PSA to **improve pharmacist wages and working conditions in recognition of their critical responsibilities, advanced training and skills.** The agreement would improve consumer health outcomes through the provision of safe and effective medication use and underpin future Community Pharmacy Agreements to ensure sustainability of the pharmacist workforce.



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The pandemic has changed the way I see pharmacy practice forever – we quickly became the first place Australians turn for healthcare.

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It's been a tough few years – made worse seeing other healthcare professionals recognised and remunerated for their efforts, while we've been left behind.

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