

16 December 2025

The Hon Daniel Mookhey MLC
Treasurer
GPO Box 5469
Sydney NSW 2001
Dear Treasurer,

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), the peak body for all pharmacists, welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission for the 2026-27 NSW Budget consultation process.

As medicine safety experts and one of our most accessible frontline health workforces, pharmacists can play a greater role in improving access to medicines and health care to enable better health outcomes for all New South Wales residents.

PSA has identified three key budget proposals for the NSW Government's consideration that would directly improve patient care:

- Fund pharmacists to undertake training to address loneliness and improve health outcomes in their communities.
- Empower pharmacists to play a greater role in reducing opioid-related harm, by funding education
- Amend NSW regulations to allow pharmacists to dispense up to 30 days' supply of essential medicines to patients in emergencies.

These measures will help strengthen health care in NSW, allowing pharmacists to do more to support the health system while it is under pressure. PSA is committed to working with the government to improve the health and wellbeing of all NSW residents.

Sincerely,



Luke Kelly FPS
NSW President

About PSA

PSA is the peak national professional pharmacy organisation representing all of Australia's 41,000 pharmacists working in all sectors and across all locations.

PSA is committed to supporting pharmacists in helping Australians to access quality, safe, equitable, efficient and effective health care. PSA believes the expertise of pharmacists can be better utilised to address the healthcare needs of all Australians.

PSA works to identify, unlock and advance opportunities for pharmacists to realise their full potential, to be appropriately recognised and fairly remunerated.

PSA has a strong and engaged membership base that provides high-quality health care and are the custodians for safe and effective medicine use for the Australian community.

PSA leads and supports innovative and evidence-based healthcare service delivery by pharmacists. PSA provides high-quality practitioner development and practice support to pharmacists and is the custodian of the professional practice standards and guidelines to ensure quality and integrity in the practice of pharmacy.

Pharmacists in NSW

In NSW, there are approximately 11,500 registered pharmacists working in community pharmacies, hospitals, general practices, aged care facilities, disability care organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, primary health networks, government departments and agencies, and within other private sector organisations.

The average Australian visits a pharmacy 18 times each year.^a Each of these interactions with a pharmacist is an opportunity to impart a health message, deliver primary healthcare, and improve the health of the NSW community. To achieve this, pharmacists need support, including remuneration, allowing them to fulfil their full scope as primary healthcare providers and medicine experts.^b

^a National Australia Bank. NAB Australian Pharmacy Survey 2021. At: <https://business.nab.com.au/nab-australian-pharmacy-survey-2021-48091/>

^b Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. Contemporary Community Pharmacy Practice: White Paper. Community of Specialty Interest. Jun 2022. At: <https://my.psa.org.au/s/article/CSI-CCPP-white-paper>

Recommendation 1

Fund pharmacists to undertake training to address loneliness and improve health outcomes in their communities.

The challenge

Nearly 40% of NSW residents experience loneliness at varying degrees, making it a making it a widespread and an urgent health priority. Loneliness significantly increases risks of depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, and premature death and is associated with increased use of primary health services including contact with pharmacy services and GPs, and results in more emergency treatments and hospital visits.^d

Beyond health, loneliness costs NSW's healthcare system and economy an estimated \$971 million annually.^c This challenge is compounded by GP workforce shortages particularly in regional NSW, where patients can wait up to 4–6 weeks for appointments. These barriers limit early intervention opportunities, creating a critical gap that pharmacists are uniquely positioned to fill as highly accessible frontline healthcare providers.

The proposed approach

Fund NSW pharmacists to undertake PSA's Loneliness Training Program.

This training empowers pharmacists to identify and respond to loneliness effectively and provides practical strategies to reduce stigma, improve medication adherence, and enhance collaboration with healthcare teams, linking patients to community supports.

Why it will work

Consumers have a high degree of trust in pharmacists and strong confidence in their ability to provide a broader range of health services. There is also widespread support for pharmacists delivering care for acute conditions and effectively managing chronic conditions.^d

Evidence from the *Standing Committee Report*^e highlights that building workforce capacity is critical to addressing loneliness at scale. Pharmacists already play a key role in medicine management and in the provision of medicine information. By integrating loneliness interventions into existing workflows, pharmacists can assist in reducing health risks, improve medicine adherence and strengthen community connections.

^c New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council. (2025). Report No. 65: The prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in New South Wales (August 2025).

^d Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. Pharmacists in 2030. op. cit.

^d New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council. (2025). Report No. 65: The prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in New South Wales (August 2025).

^e New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council. (2025). Report No. 65: The prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in New South Wales (August 2025).

Budget implications

PSA estimates it will cost \$200,000 to engage and upskill approximately 500 NSW pharmacists to deliver effective loneliness identification and intervention services

Benefits to NSW

- Improved mental and physical health for residents
- Reduced pressure on GPs and emergency departments
- Stronger community connections and resilience
- Economic savings from reduced healthcare utilisation, including hospital admissions

Recommendation 2

Empower pharmacists to play a greater role in reducing opioid-related harm, by funding education

The challenge

Opioids are the group of drugs most often implicated in unintentional drug-related deaths.^f

While naloxone is a free-to-consumer lifesaving medicine that reverses the effects of opioid overdose, not all people at risk of experiencing or witnessing opioid toxicity are identified and supplied with naloxone. This is particularly the case for people prescribed high doses of pharmaceutical opioids. The proposed approach

PSA recommends the NSW Government fund development of an education program to upskill pharmacists to identify all patients with risk of opioid overdose and proactively supply naloxone. This education would utilise the Opioid Safety Toolkit,^g and support pharmacists to integrate this tool into their practice.

Why it will work

Reducing barriers to naloxone access, and empowering pharmacists to increase consumer health literacy around prescription opioids will reduce harm caused by opioids in the NSW community.

This education would complement the work PSA has already provided in partnership with the NSW Health Centre for Alcohol and other Drugs to support pharmacists deliver the Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) and harm minimisation initiatives.

Budget implications

PSA estimates that the development and delivery of a live webinar and an interactive online training module would cost \$100,000.

Benefits to NSW

- Reduce unintentional opioid related deaths
- Increasing accessibility and knowledge of naloxone for people in NSW
- Enhanced health literacy on the safer use of prescription opioids.

^f Pennington Institute. Australia's Annual Overdose Report. 2024. At: <https://www.pennington.org.au/australias-annual-overdose-report-2024/>

^g Monash University, Burnet Institute, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and Pain Australia. Opioid safety toolkit. At: <https://safer opioiduse.com.au>

Recommendation 3

Amend NSW regulations to allow pharmacists to dispense up to 30 days' supply of essential medicines to patients in emergencies

The challenge

Patients with chronic conditions can experience treatment interruptions due to being separated from their prescriptions or medicines in an emergency. This is often caused by natural disasters, sudden unavailability of their regular doctor or personal emergencies (including bereavement or fleeing domestic violence). This leads to flare up of chronic health conditions, and in some cases results in hospital presentation.

The *NSW Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008* limits pharmacists to supplying only seven days of essential medicines without a prescription in an emergency.

The proposed approach

Amend *NSW Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008* to allow pharmacists to dispense up to 30 days' supply or the original manufacturer's pack of essential medicines in emergency circumstances.

Pharmacists would be required to assess clinical appropriateness and maintain detailed records under existing emergency supply regulation and include the same restrictions within the temporary authority. High-risk medicines, such as Schedule 4D and Schedule 8 medicines, would remain excluded.

Why it will work

Pharmacists have demonstrated they can safely and effectively provide a one-month supply of essential medicines in emergency situations in a timely manner, and at no cost to the NSW Government:

- For more than 3 years, from January 2020 to February 2023, pharmacists were able to provide a one-month supply of essential medicines in emergency situations with no reported adverse events.
- This authority already exists for ~150 medicines under the *National Health (Continued Dispensing Determination 2022)*. This proposal would extend this authority to ~800 medicines.
- NSW Health continues to issue temporary authorities to allowing pharmacists to provide a one-month supply of Schedule 4 medicines during natural disasters to support continued access to medicines during events such as bushfires and flooding.
- Similar permanent provisions have already been enacted in Queensland and Tasmania.
- The approach is consistent with the recent commitment of all state and territory treasurers in the updated National Competition Policy Federation Funding Agreement Schedule to allow health practitioners to work at their full scope of practice to improve productivity.

Budget implications

The cost of implementing this proposal is negligible. It only requires a legislative amendment and minor updates to existing regulatory guidance. This is a low-cost policy change which supports patient health and addresses a longstanding inefficiency within our health system.^h

Benefits to NSW

- Improved continuity of care during emergencies and disasters,
- Reduced health system strain by lowering demand for urgent GP and ED services
- Ensures that patients maintain access to essential medicines when they need them most.
- Better prepares NSW for the next natural disaster.
