

# UTS Community Pharmacy Barometer 2023 - Media Release December 2023

## Community Pharmacy reaction to Government 60-day policy

The 2023 UTS Community Pharmacy Barometer survey has been conducted to measure community pharmacists' confidence in their profession and the impact from the 60-day dispensing policy change implemented in September 2023.

The report contains survey data from October 2023 (5 weeks after the implementation of the 60-day dispensing policy on the 1st of September 2023) and is compared to a previous evaluation of pharmacists' perceptions in May 2023 (immediately after the announcement of the new policy on the 26th of April 2023).

Most pharmacists (82%) believe that the policy will have a negative impact on their pharmacy's net profit. So unsurprisingly the majority (93%) have reacted by adopting at least one strategy to mitigate the impact. The most common strategies implemented were related to reducing opening hours, reducing staff working hours and charging for professional services previously offered free and adopting remunerated services offered by government.

Nearly a quarter of pharmacists (22%) have already reduced their pharmacy opening hours and another 14% are considering doing so in the next 6 months to try to offset the impact of the policy. Almost half (48%) have already reduced or are considering reducing their pharmacists' working hours, and even more (64.0%) have already reduced or are considering a reduction in pharmacy assistants' working hours.

Extrapolations from the reported reductions in staffing showed that there could be the equivalent of 695 less full-time pharmacist positions (95% CI: 531; 859) and 1243 less pharmacy assistant positions (95% CI: 1080; 1407) in response to the change in policy.

Different measures have been taken in relation to professional services offered in the pharmacies. The majority (77%) have started to charge or are considering charging for services previously offered free to consumers, such as blood pressure measurement, deliveries, Webster packs, document certification and diabetes services, while others (21%) have decided to discontinue these services.

However, after the Barometer reached an all time low in May 2023 immediately following the policy announcement, this survey has shown an increase in confidence to 110.4 out of 200, returning to values seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A range of factors may be impacting pharmacists' confidence levels, including:

- a reduced level of uptake for prescribers of the 60-day policy.
- all eligible medicines are not yet available for 60-day dispensing.
- pharmacists successfully adopting strategies such as reducing staff, decreasing opening hours, increasing service provision or increasing prices to minimise the expected impact.
- the announcement of the negotiation of an early 8th Community Pharmacy Agreement (CPA).

Pharmacists are also implementing or considering implementing new services (56%), most commonly State Government-driven services (vaccinations, UTI and oral contraception prescribing) and those included in the 7CPA (diabetes MedsCheck/MedsCheck and Webster packs). Other measures being implemented and considered include increasing the product range in the pharmacy (33%) and increasing prices (60%).

The report will be available on the [UTS Barometer](#) site, along with all previous Barometer reports. For further information contact Prof K. Williams at [kylie.williams@uts.edu.au](mailto:kylie.williams@uts.edu.au).