

Board Communiqué – September 2022

Please read the highlights of key issues discussed at the RACP Board meeting on 15 September 2022. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss these matters further at president@racp.edu.au. Dr Jacqueline Small, President and Chair RACP Board.

On 29 July 1937 his majesty King George VI, the Queen's father, was graciously pleased to bestow the title "Royal" on the Australasian College of Physicians, as certified by the Australian Prime Minister to the College on 7 February 1938.

We paid our respects to the late Queen Elizabeth II. Queen Elizabeth was admired for her devotion to duty, for her commitment to the people of the United Kingdom, to the people of the Commonwealth including Australia and the world.

We welcomed the new head of state in King Charles III.

We reflected on our College's organisational values.

Future of the Faculties

In 2017 the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHEM) prepared a report to the Board entitled 'Future of the Faculties'. Since that time, work has been carried out to respond to some of the concerns and to introduce a reporting system to progress this more transparently and efficiently.

The Faculties have presented their concerns to the College Council. Common themes have been heard, including a desire for increased autonomy, scope and resourcing. We have explored these recommendations and asked the three Faculties to recommend their top priorities. We support continued work and engagement towards achieving success, particularly in the enhancement of significant policy and advocacy work.

We will continue to engage with the Faculties, and have asked our College Trainees' Committee (CTC) to look at training issues raised by Faculties.

We have invited our Faculty Presidents to our December meeting to discuss issues going forward, and intend to work together to achieve the best outcome for all.

Tracc (IT platform for training)

We have been closely monitoring the Tracc project, and thank all of our early adopters for their valuable feedback provided to date. Progress towards a platform that meets the needs of trainees and supervisors is continuing. We have asked that our CTC members be involved in the testing and that structured feedback from users is provided.

We extend our thanks to the Education, Learning and Assessment team for their work and look forward to working with our trainees and members in providing the best possible service.

Trainees' are an immediate focus

Trainees are valued members of our College and we acknowledge that at times they wait longer than they ought to do for responses to their queries. We are exploring new ways to assist our trainees when they need support, information and resources.

Digital Roadmap

We all rely on digital systems, and we are encouraging the assessment of our current infrastructure for priority improvements. Further key updates to be provided soon.

Direct Debit – Go Live

We are pleased that improved direct debit and instalment options, sought by our members are now live. We are continuing work to improve the website and member portals.

Streamline governance

We have been reviewing committee reporting structures and delegations. We know this impacts decision making and we are keen to make improvements.

We are working towards optimising this for our members. Key discussions on this topic involving the Board and College Council were held in September.

Clinical Exam Update

We are pleased to announce that all Australian Divisional Clinical Examinations (DCEs) have been completed. Aotearoa New Zealand will be complete by the end of October 2022.

We congratulate our trainees, supervisors, examiners and staff. We thank our hospitals/settings and patients for their participation - it is greatly appreciated.

CPD Cultural Safety

We are strongly encouraging members' participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities that focus on cultural safety and issues of health equity. Please watch out for further communications over the coming months.

We re-state our shared commitment to advancing Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori Health and education as core business of the College.

Overseas Trained Physicians

We extend our congratulations to our members and staff working with our Overseas Trained Physicians (OTPs). Applications have been dropping across many colleges; however we have our highest number of applications this year, and minimal disruption to our processes in our COVID-19 world. We thank our members and staff for this incredible achievement and restate the significant relationships we have with our overseas members.

UNICEF and ACOSS

UNICEF and ACOSS have endorsed our Kids COVID Catch-Up campaign, and Save the Children are in the process of doing so. Key Government meetings have included our Kids COVID Catch-up campaign on their agenda. We congratulate our members and Policy and Advocacy Team, and look forward to this being promoted nationwide.

Healthy Climate Campaign

Our Healthy Climate Future website is ready to go live, and we are conducting a survey with other medical colleges about the environmental sustainability of climate resilience on the healthcare system. We look forward to our members' valuable participation in that survey.

Our President has addressed the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, made up of Chief Health Officers nationally on climate health and change, as well as speaking at the Australian Medical Association (AMA) conference as part of the climate change and health panel.

CEC Strategy Discussion

We were delighted to welcome our College Education Committee (CEC) Chair, A/Prof Mitra Guha, and CTC Chair, Dr Hash Abdeen to our meeting to discuss significant concerns regarding education and training matters.

There will be a number of initiatives that we will consider with the CEC and CTC to improve our trainee experience as quickly as possible.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all of our members that our mental health is paramount, we all face challenging situations and we need to be informed and recognise how our health can be affected. Burnout is affecting many of us.

We encourage our members to be aware of our 'Lifeworks' Employee Assistance Program – available to all members, offering a confidential and supportive connection. Lifeworks offers support with mental, financial, physical and emotional wellbeing, it is a confidential service you can trust.

For any further information, 24/7, 365 days a year, please contact: **Australia:** 1300 361 008
Aotearoa New Zealand: 0800 155 318.

Trainees' Voice

We are committed to hearing the concerns of our trainees' and had an in-depth discussion about some high priority issues that we all want to solve as quickly as possible.

We have supported the CEC in improving Training Rotation Approvals timelines, and agreed on a number of rapid changes to support our trainees.

We are committed to updating and improving our Flexible Training Policy and have re-prioritised its review in collaboration with the CEC and CTC. We have also scheduled a meeting with the Australian Minister of Health to address workforce matters.

Since the writing of this communique, our members would have had access to the President's video message, which details matters we discussed at the September meeting. We understand current frustrations, especially with Advanced Trainee Research Projects, and are keen to address these in the best way possible. Since the Board meeting the CEC have held an extraordinary meeting out of session to progress matters as quickly as possible. A/Prof Guha and Dr Abdeen will be attending our next Board meeting to work through our next steps.

We acknowledge all of our volunteer workforce, and thank all members for their commitment to our College. We appreciate the work you do.

The Board has heard all of these important concerns, we are working closely with our members and management to provide support, and improvements as soon as possible.