

Media Release

RACP backs Royal Commission but urges immediate support of victims

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The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has welcomed today's announcement of a Royal Commission into the abuse of male teenagers in a Northern Territory youth detention centre.

The move follows Monday night's *Four Corners* program which aired multiple examples of child abuse including being tear-gassed, held in solitary confinement and stripped naked.

The RACP President Dr Catherine Yelland said the fallout of this abuse will be significant and long term for the victims, but that immediate care is also needed.

"The RACP welcomes the Royal Commission announced today by the Prime Minister, however it is also important that we take immediate steps to support the children affected," explained Dr Yelland.

"Adolescence is a critical time in a person's development. It's imperative that juvenile detention provides opportunities for young offenders to rehabilitate and develop healthy behaviours for life.

"The *Four Corners* program revealed that this is clearly not happening. Many of the victims are now at risk of long-term physical and mental health problems.

"The Royal Commission is an important development – the incarceration culture of the Northern Territory needs a complete overhaul."

Dr Yelland said paediatricians and adolescent medicine specialists are well placed to assist the Royal Commission.

"RACP members can offer invaluable expertise and experience. Sadly, many have seen the negative impacts of incarceration on detainees and the community."

Dr Yelland also repeated the RACP's call for Australia to ratify the *United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture*. This is one of many recommendations in the RACP's *The Health and Well-being of Incarcerated Adolescents* position statement.

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.