

POLICY & ADVOCACY REPORT

Q4 - October to December 2024

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of over 22,000 physicians and almost 10,000 trainee physicians, across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The RACP represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, infectious diseases 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 and the community.

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We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians and Elders – past, present and emerging – of the lands and waters on which RACP members and staff live, learn and work. The RACP acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.





Highlights

First Nations

- The RACP was honoured to be a part of the **2024 Pacific Region Indigenous Doctors Congress (PRIDoC) in Adelaide**, on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people. PRIDoC is a pivotal gathering of Indigenous health leaders from across the Pacific region and beyond.

Workforce advocacy

- Working through the **‘Your Workforce - Your Say’ survey** results with 739 members practising within Australia identifying workforce advocacy priorities and key themes from a broad cross section. Initial feedback on the survey is available via the latest [Workforce Insights](#) newsletter, and further updates are planned to support use in ongoing advocacy.
- The College Policy and Advocacy Council (CPAC) approved **three new focus areas** for workforce advocacy - workforce attraction and retention, member wellbeing and daily practice challenges, and regional, rural and remote workforce, together with the existing focus on Indigenous workforce.
- **‘Your Workforce - Your Say’ survey** findings have informed new [Federal Pre-Budget submission](#) and are undergoing member consultation and refinement before lodgement with Federal Treasury. These will be a key support for RACP Federal election advocacy.

Healthcare Reform

- Published a new [position statement](#) **‘Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand’** led by AChAM and AFPHM. The position statement was promoted on ABC 7.30 by the RACP President Professor Jennifer Martin as well as by former NSW Ice Inquiry Commissioner, Professor Dan Howard SC, at the NSW Drug Summit in Sydney in early December 2024 and via an RACP media release.
- Developed renewed [ASCEPT Evolve Top-5 recommendations to reduce low-value care pharmacology and toxicology practices](#). In December 2024 the recommendations were promoted at the ASCEPT-APFP-APSA Joint Congress, on the new [Evolve website](#), via a [media release](#), social media, the President’s Message and advertised in the MJA.

Populations in Focus

- Members attended the **Social Media Summit**, hosted by the NSW and SA Governments.
- Members were invited to **three public hearings of inquiries**: Tasmanian Inquiry into the assessment and treatment of ADHD and support services; NSW Inquiry on improving access to early childhood health and development checks; NSW Dust Diseases Scheme.
- The newly released [National Dementia Action Plan 2024–2034](#) reflected RACP recommendations from our 2023 [submission](#), and this was promoted on social media ([LinkedIn](#) [Twitter / X](#))

Member consultation page

The [Member consultation webpage](#) is now live. It is the go-to place for all RACP Policy and Advocacy consultations, including on submissions to government and College position statements.



This webpage will make it easier for you to provide your valuable input to College submissions, to add your voice to drive change, and make a real impact to your profession. A couple of key consultations have now been featured on the webpage: TGA medicines shortages and discontinuations: proposed regulatory refinements, and the draft Federal Pre-Budget recommendations.



Better care. Better decision-making. Better use of resources.

The [Evolve website](#) has been refreshed and is now live. It features a new 'Get involved' webpage, new [video library](#) and allows members to join the Evolve Policy and Advocacy Interest Group guiding the [Evolve Strategy 2022–26](#). The home page features new ASCEPT Evolve Top-5 recommendations launched in November 2024. The resources and research pages will continue to be refreshed in 2025.



Stakeholder meetings

October to December 2024

		Stakeholder	
Total Meetings	17	Federal Government	3
		State/Territory Government	2
		Medical Body	6
		Government agency	3
		Other	3

Meetings with the health sector stakeholders listed below continued through October to December, discussing shared interests and ensuring ongoing engagement.

- Professor Jennifer Martin, PRACP and Professor Lynne Madden, Multi-College Advisory Committee Chair, attended the inaugural Climate & Health Expert Advisory Group meeting, chaired by the Hon Ged Kearney MO, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care
- Professor Martin met Sam Shipley, Primary Care and Workforce Adviser, Office of the Hon Mark Butler MP (Minister for Health and Aged Care), to discuss issues impacting the physician workforce.
- Professor Martin and Nicola Lewis, Executive General Manager P&A met with Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health Dr Anne Webster MP to discuss issues facing the specialist health workforce particularly in relation to regional and rural health.
- Professor Martin, Associate Professor Kudzai Kanhutu, College Dean and Ms Lewis, met with Penny Shakespeare, Deputy Secretary, Health Resourcing Group, DoHAC to discuss issues impacting the physician workforce.
- Associate Professor Andrew Lee, Chair, South Australian Committee met with the SA Minister for Health and Wellbeing Chris Picton MP to discuss training, including the sustainability of the AFPHM training program, wellbeing and workplace culture.
- Australian Institute of Digital Health (AIDH)
- TGA – medication shortages
- CPMC Advocacy Team
- Monash University, Monash Centre for Health Research Implementation
- Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA)
- Commonwealth National Health, Sustainability and Climate unit

- Steffan Faurby, CEO & WA Committee representatives met with WA Deputy Chief Medical Officer Andrew Jamieson and members of the WA Health.
- Australian Medical Association - Public Health team
- Rural Doctors Association of Australia
- Australasian College of Emergency Medicine
- Medibank
- NHMRC ME/CFS guidelines project

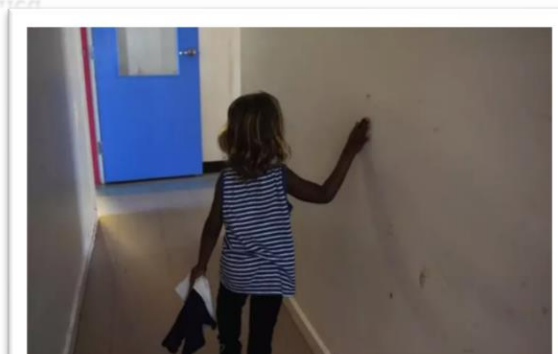
Media and advocacy

October media coverage

- [From the Northern Territory to Western Australia, alarm about treatment of people in prisons | Croakey | 31 October 2024](#)
- [Is the Australian CDC getting the start it needs? | Cosmos Magazine | 25 October 2024](#)
- [Queensland set to follow Northern Territory in implementing harmful youth justice policies, and experts are alarmed | Croakey | 24 October 2024](#)
- [Memo to next Queensland Government: physiotherapy must be central to your health reform plans | Croakey | 24 October 24](#)
- [Australian CDC needed | Pharmacy Daily | 24 October 2024](#)
- [As national COVID inquiry wraps up, experts call for action on Centre for Disease Control, and air quality in schools | Croakey | 23 October 2024](#)
- ['Jailing children makes everyone worse off' - NT Govt's new law condemned | Katherine Times | 18 October 2024](#)
- [Election builds calls for urgent action on rural health care | Queensland Country Life | 14 October 2024](#)
- [RACP urges caution on physician assistants | the limbic | 13 October 2024](#)
- [Leading health organisations urge Gov to formally establish Centre for Disease Control | Croakey | 6 October 2024](#)
- [Medical colleges, indigenous doctors, key agencies sign up to climate and health collaboration | Croakey | 1 October 2024](#)
- [What can we do to support the healthcare workforce in rural, regional and remote areas? | Informa Connect | 1 October 2024](#)



'Jailing children makes everyone worse off' - NT Govt's new law condemned



Reducing the number of Indigenous children in the child protection system must be prioritised. (Dan Peled/AAP PHOTOS)

October media releases

- [Physicians congratulate new QLD Gov, call for action on health workforce to support patient outcomes | 29 October 2024](#)
- [Action on Australian Centre for Disease Control now more urgent than ever: health experts | 23 October 2024](#)
- [Paediatricians condemn NT law lowering age of criminal responsibility | 18 October 2024](#)
- [“Seeing a medical specialist shouldn’t be this hard”: Queensland physicians present ideas to cut wait times | 08 October 2024](#)

November media coverage

- [For 20 years, Allan couldn’t sleep. Five weeks changed his life | The Sydney Morning Herald| 17 November 2024](#)
- [National Medicines Symposium 2024 Ageing well: safe medicines, better lives | Retail Pharmacy | 14 November 2024](#)
- [Holding children criminally responsible: where do we draw the line? | Education HQ | 6 November 2024](#)
- [Amid turbulent political times, the value of walking on Country and collective action for climate-resistant healthcare | Croakey | 5 November 2024](#)

CROAKEY HEALTH MEDIA

Informed, engaged communities for health

Amid turbulent political times, the value of walking on Country and collective action for climate-resilient healthcare



Walkers on Country in awareness of First Nations, users of knowledge, stories and history. Photo provided by Nikko Brown.

November media releases

- [Paediatricians advise NSW Government to improve the number of young children receiving essential early childhood health checks](#) | 18 November 2024

December media coverage

- [The Zap: packed with the latest health and aged care news – and check these consultations now open](#) | Croakey | 9 December 2024
- [Crisafulli uses new data to defend youth crime laws 'incompatible' with human rights](#) | Brisbane Times (Nine outlets) | 8 December 2024
- [Drug decriminalisation off table before summit even began](#) | Medical Republic | 4 December 2024
- ['No silver bullet': drug users need support, not court](#) | Australian Associated Press | 4 December 2024
- [Decriminalisation key for the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in their push for drug policy reforms](#) | ABC 7.30 | 3 December 2024

NEWS

Decriminalisation key for the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in their push for drug policy reforms

Exclusive by Tom Hartley



Hopes for radical change as drug summit kicks off (Tom Hartley)

December media releases

- [Physicians welcome NSW pill-testing trials | 19 December 2024](#)
- [With violence against women likely to spike over holidays, doctors call for an end to dirt-cheap grog and sports sponsorships | 19 December 2024](#)
- [Punishing kids doesn't make anyone safer - Paediatricians caution QLD Government against solutions that will backfire | 5 December 2024](#)
- [Physicians call for health-first approach to drug policy in new position statement | 4 December 2024](#)
- [Clinical Pharmacologists release new guidelines to reduce harmful medicine prescribing | 5 December](#)

Submissions, endorsements, new statements

October

- [Health checks for later career doctors](#)
 - [Tasmanian inquiry into the assessment and treatment of ADHD and support services](#)
 - [Inquiry into Australia's youth justice & incarceration system](#)
 - [Safe and Responsible Use of AI in Healthcare](#)
 - [Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol & other drugs in Australia](#)
 - [National Roadmap to improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People](#)
 - [Queensland Election Statement](#)
 - [Endorsement: Healthy Futures' Electric Hospital Retrofit Program feasibility studies budget proposal](#)
 - [Statement - Governments should undertake thorough consultation before introducing 'physician assistants'](#)
- **Aotearoa New Zealand**
 - [Pharmac renewal criteria for stimulants](#)
 - [Hauora Māori Strategy 2025](#)

November

- [RACP Position Statement Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy](#)
- [Endorsement: End Physical Punishment of Children joint statement](#)
- [Endorsement: National Standards for Childhood-onset heart disease](#)
- [Submission: NSW Special Commission of inquiry into Healthcare Funding](#)
- [Endorsement: MJA-Lancet Countdown Policy Brief Endorsement](#)

December

- [RACP Submission - Foundational \(General\) Supports for People with Disability](#)
- [Proposal to extent specialist paediatrician MBS items to GP rural generalists](#)
- Aotearoa New Zealand
 - [RACP submission to the Social Services and Community Committee on the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Legislation Amendment Bill](#)
 - [Long-term Insights Briefing – Unlocking the potential of active ageing](#)

CPAC Plan Focus Areas

1 First Nations Health and Equity

- RACP trainees, fellows and staff attended the **2024 Pacific Region Indigenous Doctors Congress** (PRIDoC) between 1 December and 7 December 2024. The RACP supported 12 First Nations and 6 Māori members to attend the event, which included the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee (ATSIHC) Chair and Deputy Chair. It is estimated that there were over 100 engagements with attendees (including medical students, early career doctors, RACP trainees/Fellows and medical specialists from other colleges).
- **RACP Deadly Doctors LinkedIn Group was launched to coincide with PRIDoC.** At the event, there was significant interest in the initiative from RACP members, other specialists and external stakeholders (including medical colleges and organisations such as the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG), Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)). Since launching in December, the number of First Nations trainees and fellows has steadily climbed (there are currently 31 active members). We anticipate that this number will grow as members continue to promote the initiative with their peers.
- **FATES funding** for First Nations Trainee Professional Development, Networking and Yarning Forums **was successful.** The trainee forums will be available for trainees in each state and territory and will commence in quarter one 2025.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee

- ATSIHC met for their final meeting of the year on 25 October 2024.
- ATSIHC attended joint meetings with the Māori Health Committee and RACP Board on 20 November 2024 and 21 November 2024. It was agreed that the next joint meeting would be moved to 28 August 2025.
- There are currently three member positions and one community member position vacant on the ATSIHC. The Expression of Interest (EOI) process to fill these vacancies commenced in October 2024. So far, we have received five EOIs from interested members. Applicants were advised that the assessment process would commence in quarter 1 2025.

2 Workforce and Healthcare Reform

- **Federal Rural Health Commission (RHC) / Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) proposal to extent specialist paediatrician MBS items to GP rural generalists:** We engaged the RDAA, outlining key remaining concerns with the scope, training and role of rural generalists in rural health systems, quality and safety barriers to equivalent item extension, and centring ongoing engagement with the College as vital to future resilience and training of rural generalists.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** An [RACP submission](#) to the Department of Health and Aged Care's consultation on the Safe and Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Legislation and Regulation highlights the potential benefits and risks of AI tools in health care, acknowledging the need for comprehensive and conscientious design, development and implementation for appropriateness and efficacy in health care and physician practice.
- **Your Workforce - Your Say Survey of practising Australian members:** Analysed results of survey of 739 members practising within Australia identifying workforce advocacy priorities and key themes from a broad cross section for ongoing advocacy planning.
- **Federal Pre-Budget recommendations 2025:** Drafted targeted, tailored recommendations for Federal spending centring specialist workforce advocacy goals and funding to reduce daily practice challenges; commenced related consultation on the [new member consultation webpage](#).
- **Physician Assistants:** The RACP published [a statement titled 'Governments should undertake thorough consultation before introducing 'physician assistants''](#) which was promoted to members via the President's Message. Key points were also raised with Government officials. It covered issues such as the need for adequate training and registration models as well as patient safety and potentially significant impact on training for medical students and junior doctors.
- **Health Checks for Late-career medical practitioners:** Represented the interests of the College and late-stage career physicians in a [submission](#) to the Medical Board of Australia's consultation *Health checks for late-stage career doctors*.

- **Australian Centre for Disease Control:** Continued to push for a well-funded, jurisdictionally linked and operational communicable, non-communicable and occupational diseases, publishing a combined [media release](#) with the PHAA, ASID, and Climate and Health Alliance.
- **Evolve:** In December we promoted renewed [ASCEPT Evolve Top-5 recommendations](#) to reduce low-value care pharmacology and toxicology practices at the ASCEPT-APFP-APSA Joint Congress, on the new [Evolve website](#), via a [media release](#), social media, the President's Message and advertised in the MJA. Launched the refreshed [Evolve website](#) in November 2024.

3 Climate

- **Health and fossil fuels:** CPAC approved P&A's Health and Fossil Fuels Position Statement Scoping Document. Development of this position statement will be a key focus for 2025, led by the RACP's Climate Change and Health Working Group (CCHWG). The position statement aims to provide health-based policy recommendations to Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand governments to protect health from the direct, climate, and environment-related impacts of fossil fuels.
- **Health National Adaptation Plan (HNAP):** The RACP made a submission on the HNAP Consultation Paper, emphasising the importance of addressing the wider determinants of health, enhancing preventive measures, ensuring adequate workforce levels, and investing in First Nations leadership. Co-Deputy CPAC Chair, and CCHWG member, Dr Arnagretta Hunter and CCHWG Chair, Associate Professor Linda Selvey attended a consultation session on the HNAP emphasising these asks.
- **MJA-Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change:** The RACP endorsed the [MJA-Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change Policy Brief for Australia for 2023](#) which calls for a nuanced and inclusive National Health and Health Action Plan and for Australian health organisations to rapidly scale-up decarbonisation efforts. The policy brief continues our longstanding partnership with the MJA-Lancet team.
- **Healthy Futures hospital electrification proposal:** The RACP endorsed [Healthy Futures' Electric Hospital Retrofit Program feasibility studies budget proposal](#) as part of our ongoing advocacy on healthcare system decarbonisation.
- **Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group (CHEAG):** RACP President Professor Jennifer Martin and Chair of the Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee, Professor Lynne Madden attended the Australian Government's second CHEAG meeting in December to discuss CHEAG's priorities in relation to National Health and Climate Strategy implementation initiatives for 2025.
- **Health Colleges Working Group on Climate Change and Health (MCWG):** Associate Professor Selvey accepted a position on a newly established Australian Government MCWG, which will focus on reducing low-value care, optimising models of care, and workforce and

training. The first meeting was held in December to discuss work colleges are already undertaking in climate change and health and plans for 2025.

- **Climate Change Health Working Group (CCHWG):** The CCHWG met in October to discuss the RACP's health and fossil fuels work and advocacy in light of recent National Health and Climate Strategy implementation activities.
- **Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee (MCAC):** The MCAC met in November to hear from the Australian Medical Council and the Department of Health and Aged Care on their work in relation to climate change and health and environmental sustainability.

4 Populations in Focus

Paediatrics and Child Health; Adolescents and Young Adult Medicine

- **Autism:** An [RACP submission](#) to the Department of Health and Aged Care on the draft National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People was provided in October, emphasising the urgent need for a coordinated, national approach to supporting the Autistic community across Australia and the paediatric workforce to meet increasing demands.

- **Social media:** The PCHD Committees are developing a new document regarding social media and children and young people. This follows a Social Media Summit held in Sydney and Adelaide in October, hosted by the NSW and SA Governments.

Representatives from the RACP invited to attend Day 1 of the joint Summit included PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur, AFPHM President-elect Dr Tony Gill, and Chapter of Community Child Health Chair, Dr Paul Hotton.



Pictured L-R: PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur, AFPHM President-elect Dr Tony Gill, and Chapter of Community Child Health Chair, Dr Paul Hotton

- **ADHD:** An [RACP Submission](#) to the Tasmanian Parliamentary Inquiry into the assessment and treatment of ADHD and support services was provided in October, advocating for improved access to neurodevelopmental assessments and recognition of and funding for the increased complexity of these assessments, noting how this impacts waitlists and physician wellbeing. RACP representatives were invited to attend a public hearing of the Inquiry in November with PCHD President, Dr Nitin Kapur, Tasmanian Committee Chair, Dr Theresa Naidoo, and Tasmanian Committee Member, Associate Professor Heinrich Weber attending. The members advocated for improvements to paediatric waitlists in Tasmania, including increasing the number of training positions for paediatric trainees, providing urgent funding to support

paediatricians and support services in schools, supporting integrated cross-profession approaches to care, and facilitating access to support post-diagnosis.

- **Child Health and Development Checks:** RACP representatives attended a public hearing of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on improving access to early childhood health and development checks in November, following the [RACP Submission](#) to the same Inquiry. Professor Nitin Kapur, PCHD President and Dr Vanessa Sarkozy, NSW Developmental Paediatrician, advocated for improvements to the checks to address gaps in outcomes for vulnerable children, expand models of care to support children in rural and remote communities, invest in multidisciplinary teams and models of care to integrate health, social care and family support, and access to quality childhood education programs for 3-year-olds to support children’s development in the critical early years.

Occupational Respiratory Diseases

- **National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (NORDR):** In its first year of operation, RACP physicians continue to contribute their time to ensure the NORDR is fit for purpose. An Operations Advisory Group is being established by the Department of Health and Aged Care, which will include RACP physicians.
- **NSW Dust Diseases Scheme 2024:** A public hearing was held in November with two RACP members, Professor Tim Driscoll and Dr Jane Muir, providing evidence to the NSW Parliament Standing Committee on Law and Justice, emphasising the need for improved prevention, identification, monitoring and treatment of occupational respiratory diseases. The RACP has provided expert evidence since 2019 and the Committee’s reports to the NSW Government reflect many RACP recommendations.
- **NSW Coal Industry Health Surveillance and “black lung disease”:** In November, a joint letter was sent to Minister Sophie Cotsis, NSW Minister for Work Health and Safety, regarding coal workers’ pneumoconiosis (black lung disease), prompted by a recent review of the NSW Coal Miners Health Surveillance Scheme. The letter congratulated the work that had been achieved so far and contained further recommendations to see improved control for, followed by elimination, of the disease.
- **Silica dust advocacy:** In December, Aotearoa NZ spokesperson Dr Alexandra Muthu spoke on Newstalk ZB regarding the health risks from exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) dust, inconsistent risk management practices in Aotearoa NZ and options to improve the controls currently in place.

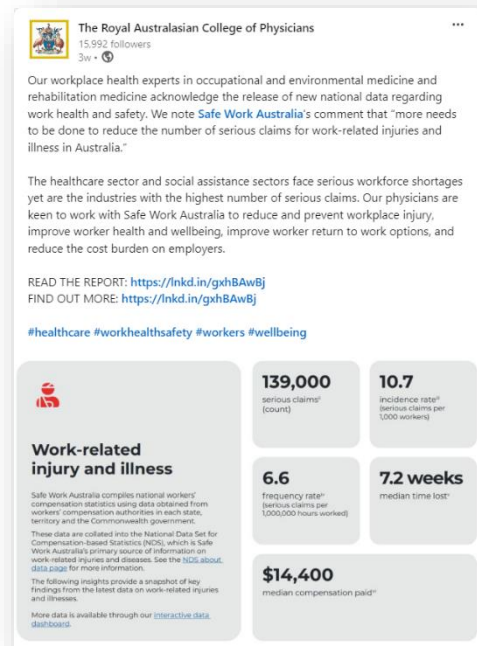
Rehabilitation Medicine

- The inaugural meeting of the Bi-National Rehabilitation Position Statement (BNRPS) Working Group was held in November and began discussions on shaping a position statement for rehabilitation medicine, emphasising the distinct role of rehabilitation across the lifespan and its integration into global health strategies like the WHO Rehabilitation 2030 Initiative. Key issues discussed included advocacy for rehabilitation’s unique value, workforce challenges, equitable

access, and integration with systems such as the NDIS. Members highlighted the need for stronger political advocacy, leveraging data from sources like AROC to demonstrate the economic benefits of rehabilitation and addressing leadership gaps in the field. Collaboration, transparency, stakeholder engagement and consumer input were prioritised.

Worker health

- National Safe Work Month** was held in October and provided an opportunity to highlight that the healthcare and social assistance sectors face serious workforce shortages; they are the industries with the highest number of serious claims, and physicians play an important role in reducing and preventing workplace injury and improving worker health and wellbeing.
- Improving the health of health care workers:** The multidisciplinary Working Group for this project met in November to continue work on the guidance document to healthcare organisations and to frame its key recommendations. Three new members have been appointed to the Working Group bringing wide and diverse health system experience including rural.
- Value of occupational and environmental medicine (OEM) in healthcare:** The Working Group met in October regarding its draft position statement on the role of OEM in healthcare organisations, highlighting the value-add to the worker-related occupational health issues faced in those organisations.



Palliative Medicine

- National Carers Week** was promoted in October via the RACP social media platforms as a time to recognise, celebrate, and raise awareness about the vital role of the 3 million Australians who provide care to a family member or friend. Their dedication and compassion are essential to the wellbeing of the people they care for and this week served to acknowledge their invaluable contributions to society.

Sexual Health Medicine

- Met with the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM) to discuss HIV clinical indicators and testing awareness.



Disability

- The RACP delivered a submission to the Department of Social Services (DSS) in response to their consultation on NDIS General Supports. The consultation paper is part of the DSS's ongoing efforts to gather input from people with disabilities, their families, carers and other stakeholders to inform the design and implementation of supports beyond those provided by the NDIS or mainstream services. The RACP submission reflects its commitment to advocating for comprehensive and inclusive support systems that empower people with disabilities to fully participate in the community and make informed decisions about their lives.
- The RACP also supported International Day of People with Disability on December 3, 2024, through a variety of social media posts.



Addiction Medicine

- Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia: In October, the AChAM, in consultation with other College bodies and specialty societies, led a College submission to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) in Australia. This submission stresses the crucial importance of governments moving away from the dominant paradigm of criminality as the means to deal with individuals who use drugs and adopt instead an increased focus on health and wellbeing to improve outcomes for individuals and communities more broadly. The submission covers a broad range of issues including the need for Federal, State and Territory governments to invest in alcohol and other drug services to meet unmet demand, rebalance funding to prioritise harm reduction, prevention and treatment and implement evidence-based harm reduction measures as well as stronger regulatory measures to address the harmful role of alcohol on children, young people, families and societies.
- **Advocacy for patients receiving treatment for opioid dependency**: The AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop, wrote to the Assistant Secretary for Alcohol & Other Drugs at the Department of Health and Aged Care, advocating for patients receiving buprenorphine modified

release injections more frequently than 28 days as treatment for opioid dependency to be able to access 6-month prescriptions by extending maximum repeats from 5 to 7.

- **Publication of a new position statement ‘Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand’** led by AChAM and AFPHM in November 2024. This Position Statement provides the rationale and evidence for a health-focused approach to guide policy development by governments and organisations in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It aims to support governments at all levels in developing a comprehensive, all-of-government response to illicit drug issues, covering education, prevention, treatment, and harm reduction strategies that are effective, ethical, empowering, and evidence-based.

The Position Statement was promoted on [ABC 7.30](#) on which RACP President Professor Jennifer Martin was interviewed, as well as by former NSW Ice Inquiry Commissioner, Professor Dan Howard SC, at his plenary presentation at the NSW Drug Summit in Sydney in early December 2024 and via an [RACP media release](#) titled *Physicians call for health-first approach to drug policy in new position statement*.



- **Advocacy at the NSW Drug Summit:** RACP representatives including Professor Martin, Professor Dunlop, AChAM President-elect, Professor John Saunders and Associate Professor Bridin Murnion, President of the RACP-affiliated Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists (ASCEPT) attended various days of the NSW Drug Summit to advocate for a health-focused approach to drug use through evidence-based measures, as outlined in the recently published RACP Position Statement ‘Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand’.
- **Support for drug checking at music festivals in NSW:** Following the NSW Drug Summit, the NSW Government announced a trial of drug checking services at summer music festivals, a harm reduction measure the RACP has long been advocating for and which we welcomed through [a media release](#).
- **Advocacy to reduce alcohol harm and violence against women :** The AChAM led the development of a [media release](#) calling for an end to cheap alcohol and sports sponsorship noting spikes in violence against women around holidays and major sporting matches due to harmful levels of alcohol consumptions. This media release also called on the recently elected Northern Territory Government not to repeal its minimum unit pricing policy given its effectiveness in decreasing alcohol-related assaults and emergency department presentations over the first 3 years of its operation.

Aotearoa New Zealand

- **Workforce advocacy:** In December, the Chair of Aotearoa NZ Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) Committee, Dr Rod Nicholson and Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) President and Deputy Chair, Dr Mike England, wrote to Commissioner of Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora, Professor Lester Levy. They urged better use of the clinical leadership and expertise that our Fellows can provide and highlighted the importance of supporting workforce development through the provisions of both Specialist and Trainee posts across the organisation.

Recent Submissions

- **Hauora Māori Strategy:** In October the Māori Health Committee (with support from Policy and Advocacy) led an RACP [submission](#) to Manatū Hauora | the Ministry of Health on developing the Hauora Māori Strategy. This consultation aimed to test and refine proposals for the Strategy before it is presented to Cabinet in December and launched in early 2025. The RACP called for the Aotearoa health system to honour the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi in the way it is managed and operated, to be pro-equity, and to enhance long-term health outcomes for whānau Māori.
- **Active ageing:** In December the RACP submitted to Manatū Hauora | Ministry of Health supporting the exploration of 'active ageing' as a critical topic for a Long-term Insights Briefing to provide information about medium and long-term trends, risks and opportunities that may affect Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System:** In December the RACP [submitted](#) to the Social Services and Community Committee strongly supporting the provisions of the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Legislation Amendment Bill. RACP supported plans to make the Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor an Independent Crown Entity (ICE) and to replace the Children and Young People's Commission's five-member board structure with a sole Children's Commissioner.
- **Principles of Treaty of Waitangi Bill:** In December the Māori Health Committee (with support from Policy and Advocacy) led an RACP [submission](#) to the Justice Committee strongly opposing the Bill, viewing it as an incorrect and misleading interpretation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi that undermines Aotearoa New Zealand's constitution and prejudices against Māori, representing an act of bad faith. The RACP urged the Justice Committee to recommend against the Bill's second reading and highlighted concerns about the Bill's potential negative impact on Māori health outcomes.

State and Territory Advocacy

Northern Territory

- NT Committee Chair wrote to the new Minister for Health, the Hon Steven Edgington MLA, seeking to meet with him on RACP and NT Committee priorities.
- Meeting with the new NT Health Chief Executive.
- Signatory to [FARE open letter to NT Government](#) calling for the retention of minimum unit pricing and other measures to reduce the harms associated with alcohol use.
- Social media advocating for Minimum Unit Pricing to be retained in the NT.
- NT workforce/wellbeing focus group held before the 2024 NT Annual Scientific Meeting.

Western Australia

- WA workforce/wellbeing focus group held on 9 October 2024, informing WA Election Statement development.
- 2025 WA Election Statement planned and scoped.
- Engagement with representatives in the WA Minister for Health and Mental Health's Office about implementation of recommendations following the Child Development Service Inquiry.
- The RACP President and CEO, and other WA Committee representatives met with the WA Office of the Chief Medical Officer to discuss collaboration on issues affecting WA physicians, trainees and patients.
- The WA Committee Chair, AChAM Committee President and AChAM Committee WA Branch Convenor met with the WA Chief Health Officer and Director of Public Health Regulation about addiction medicine issues.

NSW/ACT

- NSW/ACT workforce/wellbeing focus group held on 25 November 2024.
- The RACP made a further submission to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding in NSW.

Victoria

- VIC workforce/wellbeing focus group held on 11 November 2024.

Queensland

- RACP 2024 [QLD Election Statement](#) published.
- Letter to new Premier and new Minister for Health and Ambulance Services seeking meeting – latter confirmed for Q1 2025.

South Australia

- South Australia Committee Chair met with SA Minister for Health and Wellbeing to discuss training, wellbeing and workplace culture, and the sustainability of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHEM) training program.
- SA Minister for Health and Wellbeing will attend the SA ASM (deferred to Q1 2025)
- SA Committee Chair met with the SA RANZCP Chair to discuss opportunities to collaborate on policy and advocacy and education initiatives.
- Two SA paediatricians formally appointed to represent the RACP on the new SA Autism Assessment and Diagnosis Advisory Group.

Tasmania

- Letter to new Tasmanian Minister for Health, with a meeting being organised for Q1 2025.
- Engagement with the Tasmanian Department of Health on Tasmanian 20-Year Preventive Health Strategy in preparation for a Key Informant Interview and Submission due in 2025.

Your feedback

We understand the importance of feedback. If you have the time, please complete a 2-question survey to help us understand if this is a helpful report and suggest any improvements.

[Complete survey here](#)

P&A Team

For more information, contact the Policy and Advocacy Team:

policy@racp.edu.au (Aus) or

policy@racp.org.nz (AoNZ)