

POLICY & ADVOCACY REPORT

Q1 January to March 2024

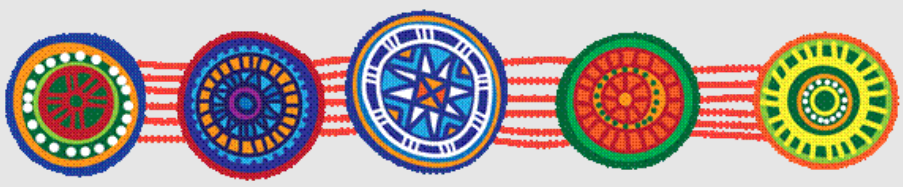
The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of over 20,000 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.





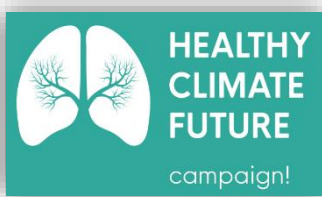
Highlights

- **First Nations:** Dr Kimberley Male, appointed Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee.
- **Pre-Federal Budget submission:** The RACP's [pre-budget advocacy covered a range of key workforce, access to care, health reform and preventative health issues.](#)
- **Telehealth advocacy:** Dr Jacqueline Small, former President, spoke to [radio outlets](#) advocating for the reinstatement of a full suite of telehealth MBS items following the RACP's [media release](#). The Hon Kirsty McBain, Minister for Regional Development, acknowledged the relevance of the College's telehealth advocacy to regional patients.
- **Climate Change:** The RACP released a climate-focussed pre-budget [media release](#), which received significant media coverage including an ABC breakfast interview.
- **Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine:** Two successful meetings held for the RACP's *first* Youth Advisory Group, which has been established to support the development of the new RACP position statement on Youth Appropriate Health Care.
- **Medication shortages:** The RACP provided a [submission](#) to a key TGA consultation on the management of medicine shortages in Australia.
- **Tasmanian election statement:** The Tasmanian Committee developed an [election statement](#) calling on political leaders in Tasmania to commit to a range of priorities. The RACP reached out to all 3 political parties, all of whom affirmed our asks.
- **Silicosis:** widespread media coverage following the publication of the RACP [media release](#) calling on the New Zealand Government to follow Australia's lead to ban engineered stone and support workers already exposed to silica dust.
- **EVOLVE:** The RACP attended **the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Australian and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science (TSANZSRS) Annual Scientific Meeting** to promote the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) Evolve low-value care recommendations.

Advocacy campaign updates



The RACP has long advocated for national regulations to reduce junk food advertising to children on all media through our [Switch off the Junk](#) campaign. Our leadership was recognised by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care through our participation in design workshops for a regulatory system attended by PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur. The College since followed up with a [submission](#) to the Department on the detailed design of an effective regulatory system that promotes the health and wellbeing of children from the earliest point in life.



The RACP sent renewed invitations to 29 specialty societies and the Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians to endorse the [Healthy Climate Future Campaign](#). The Campaign is currently supported by 13 medical colleges and 11 specialty societies.

CPAC Plan Focus Areas

1 First Nations Health and Equity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee

- The first ATSIHC meeting of the year recommended to the Board the appointment of Dr Kimberley Male as Chair and welcomed 2 new members - Dr Elkie Hull, Pediatrician and Dr Scott Jones, Nephrologist. The ATSIHC 2024 Workplan was considered and will go to the Board for approval.
- Reconciliation Australia has conditionally approved the RACP Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We aim to launch the new RAP in May during Reconciliation Week.

Indigenous Strategic Framework

- Mid-term Indigenous Strategic Framework review planning has commenced.

Youth Justice / Raise the Age

- The SA Government is proposing to [raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility \(MACR\)](#) from 10 years to 12 years of age.
- The RACP made a [submission](#) to the Queensland Youth Justice Inquiry, covering the RACP's advocacy to raise the MACR to 14 years, the need for comprehensive health assessment and

supports, and the importance of First Nations leadership in system reform and healthcare delivery.

2 Health reform

- The RACP 2024 [Pre-Budget Submission](#) to the Australian Government Treasury promoted via [media release](#) and social media.
- Ongoing advocacy on telehealth as part of the College's Pre-Budget push recognised by the Minister for Regional Development, Kirsty McBain on ABC radio.
- [Submission to Department of Health and Aged Care Feasibility Study on options to limit junk food advertising to children](#). This identified necessary components of a national regulatory system to reduce the harmful exposure of children to junk food advertising in all its forms.
- [Submission to the TGA on the challenges and opportunities of medicines shortages in Australia](#). This identifies key issues for specialists and their patients when a medicine shortage occurs, impacts for clinical care, practitioner workload and wellbeing. It proposes reforms to TGA processes for predicting, identifying, assessing and communicating shortages and strategies to attract and retain international supplies as well as strengthen local markets.
- Briefing to Dr Kerry Chant PSM, NSW CHO, on innovative models of secondary prevention and care involving specialists in community settings to support her engagement with the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into healthcare funding.
- Advice to the TGA on the removal of glucagon-like-peptide-1 receptor agonist analogues from the pharmacist extemporaneous compounding exemption. This offered broad support for the amendment and provided feedback on potential unintended consequences.
- The RACP attended the TSANZSRS ASM exhibition to promote TSANZ Evolve low-value care recommendations.
- Planning a CSIRO/College antimicrobial resistance campaign promoting Evolve.
- Wide-ranging social media campaign in the lead up to World Obesity Day.

3 Climate

- The RACP provided [advice to the Australian Federal Treasury](#) emphasising the need to quantify the costs of climate change on health and the economic benefits of taking action to inform climate health policy.
- We released a climate-focussed pre-budget [media release](#), which received significant media coverage including an ABC breakfast interview.
- The RACP endorsed a joint article on climate change and health with the Royal College of Physicians London and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. It is currently being pitched for publication in an academic journal.

- The Climate Change and Health Working Group met in March and discussed the release of Australia's National Health and Climate Strategy, the Australian National Adaptation Plan consultation, and the planned position statement on health and fossil fuels.
- P&A continues to meet with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care to discuss progress on the Implementation of the National Health and Climate Strategy.
- The RACP held a multi-college consultation on anaesthetic and other gases, at the request of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Twenty-seven members from across ten medical colleges attended, including four RACP members.
- The RACP attended Asthma Australia's second inhaler roundtable, focusing on reducing emissions from respiratory inhalers and transitioning to quality, low-carbon asthma care.
- The RACP participated in the Macquarie University Australian Institute of Health Innovation Research Roundtable, addressing the impact of climate change on human health and bridging research and action for a sustainable future.

4 Populations in Focus

Paediatrics and Child Health

- RACP submission to the [NSW Inquiry into improving access to early childhood health and development checks](#) outlines five key recommendations responding to the Inquiries [Terms of Reference](#). The recommendations include prioritising investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leadership, the expansion of models of care which support children in rural and remote communities to access health services, the importance of multidisciplinary teams for child assessments and initiatives that support access to quality early childhood education programs for all three-year-olds. Further activity on the Inquiry has been deferred pending completion of another Inquiry being led by the Committee.

Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine

- Two meetings of the RACP's *first* Youth Advisory Group were held during January and March. The Youth Advisory Group was established in late 2023 to support the development of the new RACP position statement on Youth Appropriate Health Care. We are privileged to have twelve young people participating in this important policy work.

Disability

- The RACP provided a [submission](#) to the Department of Social Services regarding the Disability Royal Commission's final report. This focused on ensuring a greater focus on healthcare issues in the Government's response to the Royal Commission. A table detailing the inclusion of a significant number of RACP recommendations in the Royal Commission's final report can be found [here](#).

- The final report of the Government's NDIS Review, *Working Together to Deliver the NDIS* echoed many of the recommendations by the RACP over the past four years. To view a comparison of *Working Together to Deliver the NDIS* and recommendations made by the RACP since 2020, click [here](#).

Addiction medicine

- [Consultation](#) with relevant committees, affiliated societies and members on the draft Drug Policy Position Statement developed by the joint AChAM/AFPHM Drug Policy Working Group
- Advocacy in support of the recently implemented NSW drug diversion scheme via a [media release](#).

COVID-19

- In February, the Australian Government published its [response](#) to the House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Report's [final report](#) on the [Inquiry into Long COVID and Repeated COVID Infections](#), (published in April 2023.) Overall, the Australian Government was supportive of the report recommendations, which aligned strongly with the RACP's recommendations in its [inquiry submission](#).

Health care of workers

- The Improving the Health of Healthcare Workers (IHCW) working group held its third meeting in March and has advanced its development of the new guidance policy document.

5 Aotearoa New Zealand

Silicosis

- A RACP [media release](#) asking for urgent government action on silicosis was published. This called for a ban on the use of engineered stone and an official Registry of people with workplace silica dust exposure to allow long-term follow-up and support. Media follow-up also included broad online and radio coverage.

Syphilis

- The RACP endorsed a letter from the New Zealand Sexual Health Society asking for government action to address the syphilis epidemic. The letter outlines the goal should be elimination of congenital syphilis, reduction of syphilis cases to below 2014 case numbers and elimination of the inequity in case numbers between Māori and other ethnicities. This letter was supported by the Māori Health Committee, AChSHM, Aotearoa Policy and Advocacy Committee and Aotearoa NZ Committee.

State and Territory Advocacy

Northern Territory

- [Submission](#) to the NT Government's consultation process for developing a framework for Voluntary Assisted Dying, aligning closely to the College's existing statements.

Western Australia

- Welcomed major expansion of Child Development Service, following submission to and evidence given at WA Parliamentary Inquiry.

NSW/ACT

- Meeting with NSW Health Minister covering accreditation, workforce, and wellbeing. Follow-up meetings were arranged with the Deputy Secretary for Regional Health focusing on regional, rural and remote issues, with a further meeting planned in May with the District Director, Medical Workforce, Ministry of Health focusing on workforce and education training.

Queensland

- Meeting with QLD Health Minister covering workforce and physician/trainee wellbeing
- RACP [submission](#) to QLD Parliament's Youth Justice Reform Inquiry, and [media](#) supporting.

Tasmania

- An early election was held in on Saturday 23 March 2024. The Tasmanian Committee developed an [election statement](#) calling on political leaders in Tasmania to commit to a range of priorities. These included supporting the specialist workforce to meet growing health care needs, fostering a culture of wellbeing for physicians and trainees, improving access to healthcare for priority populations including older people, people with disabilities, paediatric care in the community, universal quality early childhood education, and evidence-based school support for children.
- A [media release](#) was published with the statement also promoted on the Tasmanian ROC.
- The election statement received responses from all three major parties (the Liberal Government, the ALP, and the Greens), affirming our advocacy asks.

Submissions and endorsements

January

- [Pre-Budget Submission to the Australian Treasury 2024](#)

February

- [RACP Submission to the Department of Social Services regarding the Disability Royal Commission Final Report](#)
- [RACP Advice to Australian Federal Treasury on Modelling the Health Impacts of Climate Change](#)
- [Submission to the new Aged Care Act draft Exposure Bill](#)
- [RACP Submission to the Queensland Youth Justice Reform Select Committee – Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform](#)

March

- [RACP Submission to the Northern Territory Voluntary Assisted Dying Consultation](#)
- [RACP Submission on Public Consultation: Feasibility study on options to limit unhealthy food marketing to children](#)
- [Prioritising Health: Tasmanian Election Statement 2024](#)
- [RACP Submission to the NSW Inquiry into improving access to early childhood health and development checks](#)

Media and advocacy

January media coverage:

- Dr Jacqueline Small, former President featured in an article published by The Age, discussing the *'significant and widespread increase in demand for paediatricians'* ['Trying times for parents' as waitlists for paediatricians blow out | The Age | 8](#)

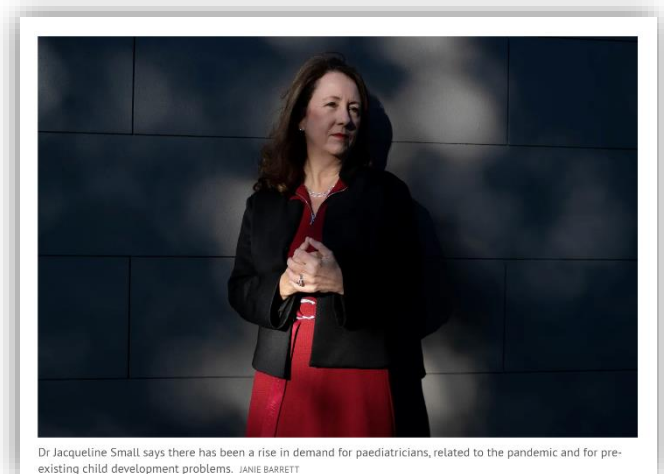
January 2024

THE AGE

Dr Jacqueline Small, president of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), said there had been a significant and widespread increase in demand for paediatricians, that was related to the pandemic, and a pre-existing global rise in child development problems, including autism and Tourette's syndrome.

"Some of it might be that we're better at detecting concerns early because we know intervening early can make a difference. But it could well be that there are other factors at play as well," Small said.

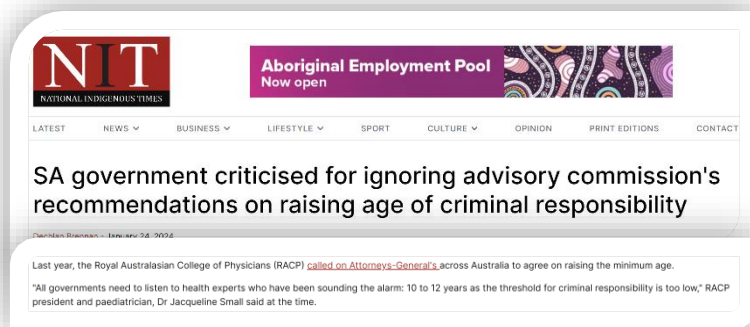
...the new law as a sign of the government's commitment to addressing the issue. ...



Dr Jacqueline Small says there has been a rise in demand for paediatricians, related to the pandemic and for pre-existing child development problems. JANIE BARRETT

Dr Jacqueline Small, former RACP President

- [COVID research highlights vaccine inequalities, and the needs of young people and victim-survivors with long COVID | Croakey Health Media | 24 January 2024](#)
- [SA government criticised for ignoring advisory commission's recommendations on raising age of criminal responsibility | National Indigenous Times | 24 January 2024](#)



February media releases:

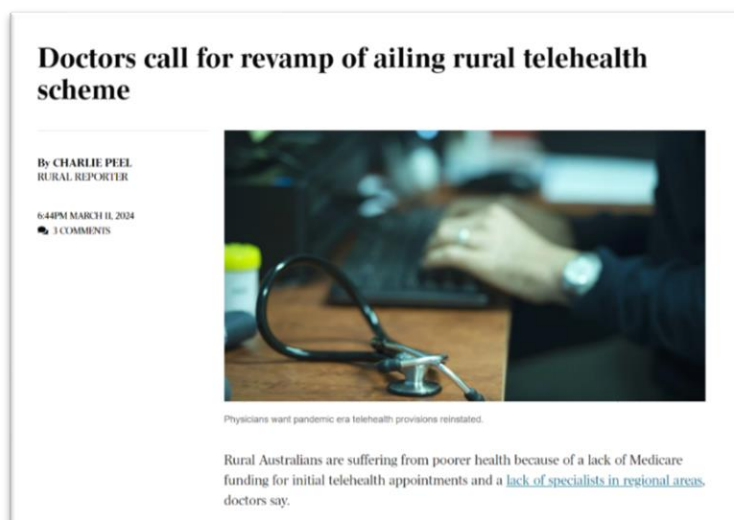
- [New drug approach in NSW welcomed by addiction medicine experts | 28 February 2024](#)

March media releases:

- [Physicians want to remove barriers to care for vulnerable patients | 12 March 2024](#)
- [Physicians call on New Zealand Government to follow Australia's lead to ban engineered stone and support workers already exposed to silica dust | 18 March 2024](#)
- [Physicians say workforce shortages must be addressed to support Tasmania's most vulnerable patients | 19 March 2024](#)
- [Healthcare system not prepared for extreme weather events, as Australia continues breaking weather records | 20 March 2024](#)

March Media coverage:

- [Doctors urge ban on benchtop material engineered stone, warn tradies of risk from silicosis lung disease | NZ Herald | 19 March 2024](#)
- The RACP's Pre-Budget asks for telehealth were widely promoted in an article for the Australian News paper: [Doctors call for revamp of ailing rural telehealth scheme | 12 March 2024](#)



- Dr Jacqueline Small, former President, [featured on ABC news](#) promoting the RACP’s Pre-budget submission, calling on the Federal Government to fully fund a National Climate Health Strategy.
- Dr Arnagretta Hunter, Deputy CPAC Chair, was interviewed on the ABC about the impacts of extreme weather events on health and how to make the health system climate resilient.



Dr Jacqueline Small, former RACP President



Dr Arnagretta Hunter, Deputy CPAC Chair

Stakeholder meetings

Activity Type		Stakeholder		Engagement Type	
Meetings	21	State/Territory Government	5	Department of Health & Aged Care	5
		Medical Body	9	Department of Health	1
		Government Body	5	Ministers	2
		Other	1	Other	10

January to March 2024

Meetings with health sector stakeholders continued through January to March, discussing shared interests and ensuring ongoing engagement.

- AMA
- AVANT
- Australian College of Emergency Medicine
- Australian College of Dermatology
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

- Occupational Therapy Australia
- Grattan Institute
- ACT Health
- Queensland Health
- Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care officials
 - Environmental Health & Climate Change team
 - Working Better for Medicare Review team
 - National Medical Workforce Policy and Strategy team

Government relations

January

- Meeting with **Minister Ryan Park, NSW Minister for Health & NSW Minister for Regional Health** with former President, Dr Jacqueline Small, Dr Sayontonee Ghosh, Chair of the NSW & ACT Regional Committee and Nicola Lewis, Executive General Manager P&A focusing on accreditation, assessment of overseas trained physicians and broader health and workforce issues in NSW including drug reform and child health.

February

- Meeting with **The Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, QLD Health Minister**, with Professor Brian Wood, QLD Chair, Professor Tony Rahman, Deputy Chair, Dr Dayna Law, QLD Committee lead on workforce and Timothy Bowen, Acting Executive General Manager, P&A focusing on accreditation, assessment of overseas trained physicians and broader health and workforce issues in QLD.
- Meeting with **Dr Liz Develin, Deputy Secretary for the Primary and Community Care Group, Department of Health & Aged Care (DOHAC)**, with President-elect Professor Jennifer Martin, Nicola Lewis, Executive General Manager, P&A and Dr Kudzai Kanhutu, College Dean, focusing on the role of specialists in community care, and particularly the integration of community-based specialists with primary care for the prevention of chronic disease.

March

- Meeting with **Professor Tony Lawler, Deputy Secretary, Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA)** with President-elect, Professor Jenny Martin and Nicola Lewis, Executive General Manager, P&A focusing on medicine shortages/discontinuation of medicines and TGA approach to alerting health professionals and its serious scarcity substitution instruments strategy.
- Meeting with **Luke Sloane, Deputy Secretary, NSW Regional Health** Nicola Lewis, Executive General Manager, P&A focusing on regional, rural and remote issues.

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 any improvements.

[Complete survey here](#)

P&A Team

For more information, contact the Policy and Advocacy Team policy@racp.edu.au (Aus)
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