



**RACP**  
Specialists. Together  
EDUCATE ADVOCATE INNOVATE

# POLICY & ADVOCACY REPORT

Q2 April to June 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.



*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.*

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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 or if we can make any improvements.

**[Complete survey here](#)**



## Highlights

### First Nations

- Dr Elkie Hull, celebrated at Congress and Convocation 2024 as **Australia's first female Aboriginal Paediatrician**.
- **Professor Phillip Mills**, a long-standing member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee, was awarded an **Honorary Fellowship** at Convocation 2024.

### Workforce and Health Reform

- In a **win for extensive RACP telehealth advocacy**, the MBS Review Advisory Committee has recommended that the Federal Government reinstate phone consultations for subsequent specialist MBS consultations and maintain video for initial specialist consultations.
- Extensive media coverage following the **RACP's call for urgent action to address medicines shortages**.
- College Dean A/Prof Kudzai Kanhutu appointed as the **RACP representative to the new Medical Workforce Advisory Collaboration (MWAC)**, guiding the implementation of the National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021- 2031.
- Meetings on workforce issues with the **Hon Dr Shane Reti, Aotearoa New Zealand Minister of Health and Northern Territory Minister for Health, the Hon Selena Uibo**.

### Climate and Health

- Extensive RACP involvement in **Multi-College Roundtable on Climate Change and Health** hosted by Federal Health Department and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

### Populations in Focus

- ACT Government announcement **extending care leave support to age 21**, a recommendation of the RACP Position Statement: Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services.
- Following persistent College advocacy, the Hon Ged Kearney, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, launched the **first National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry** to improve occupational health and safety in Australian workplaces.
- Western Australian Parliamentary Inquiry report **into Child Development Services extensively considering issues raised by the RACP**.

## Advocacy campaign updates



The Royal College of Pathologists of Australia joined the **Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee** and endorsed the **Healthy Climate Futures Campaign** - 14 out of 15 medical colleges have now signed up to the campaign. 14 specialty societies have also joined the Campaign.

## CPAC Plan Focus Areas

### 1 First Nations Health and Equity

- **Congress and Convocation 2024** was a huge success celebrating Australia's first female Aboriginal Paediatrician Dr Elkie Hull and the Honorary Fellowship bestowed to Professor Phillip Mills. Two sessions were delivered on cultural safety and health excellence in Indigenous women. Both sessions had good attendance and were celebrated by attendees.



- **New community members to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee (ATSIHC)**, Dr Kate Armstrong FAFPHM and Ms Tania Brown.
- The ATSIHC Committee wishes our **retiring members - long serving elder Uncle Phil Mills and our devoted Advanced trainee Dr Melissa Carroll** - all the very best.
- The Biyani team has commenced **PriDOC preparation**, hosted by the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association on Kurna Country (Adelaide) in December.
- Extensive RACP response to a Victorian Yoorrook Justice Commission request for information on the College's support of Indigenous paediatric members and Indigenous healthcare advocacy.

### 2 Workforce and Health Reform

- **Workforce advocacy engagement** – meeting with a broad range of RACP groups across the College to explore key workforce advocacy priorities and proposed solutions
- **Scope of practice** - RACP Brief to the Australian Government's *Unleashing the Potential of our Workforce – Scope of Practice Review* emphasising the role of physicians primary care and high quality multi-disciplinary care, in collaboration with GPs and allied health professionals.

- **Federal budget** - widely promoted key College Federal Pre-Budget asks in the lead up to budget announcement and called attention to wins and missed opportunities in the budget through a series of media releases on [Urgent Care Clinics](#), the [interim Centre for Disease Control](#), and need for [funded health equity measures](#) including prevention strategies.
- **Medications**
  - Feedback to Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee on principles to guide PBS prescribing eligibility
  - Significant interest from media following RACP's [media release on medication shortages](#), including interviews with RACP President Professor Jennifer Martin.



- **Telehealth / Urgent Care Clinics**
  - In a win for extensive RACP telehealth [advocacy](#), the MBS Review Advisory Committee [has recommended](#) that the Federal Government reinstate phone telehealth for subsequent specialist MBS consultations and continue to permit video consultations for initial specialist consultations.
  - Meeting with Office of Dr Kirsty McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories to discuss telehealth and urgent care clinics
- **Hospital funding** - submission to the Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority's Pricing Framework for Australian Public Hospital Services 2025-2026 consultation. Key feedback in the submission addresses the need to update classifications for pricing to better reflect complexity of care, account for and respond to the needs of the healthcare system and improvements needed for data collection and safety and quality.
- **Low value care** – the RACP [Evolve report from August 2023 to January 2024](#) shared cross-College.

### 3 Climate and Health

- **National engagement**
  - Federal Health Department presented at a meeting of the RACP led Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee (MCAC) about implementation of actions in the Australian [National Health and Climate Strategy](#) relating to optimising models of care, reducing unwarranted healthcare variation and low value care, and mobilising the health workforce.
  - RACP delegates, led by President Professor Jennifer Martin, attended a Multi-College Roundtable on Climate Change and Health hosted by the Federal Health Department and

- the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), focusing on a high-quality, low-carbon, and climate resilient health system.
  - Work with Federal Health Department on the synergies between RACP’s Evolve program and climate change and health.
  - Regular Federal Health Department engagement on implementation of the National Health and Climate Strategy.
  - A/Professor Linda Selvey, Chair of the RACP Climate Change and Health Working Group provided expert advice to the CSIRO project on the impact that climate change could have on communicable disease risks in Australia by 2050.
  - RACP brief to the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges on the RACP’s climate change and health work, including its leadership in bringing 14 medical colleges together to support joint advocacy.
- **Medical Journal of Australia and Lancet**
  - Dr Greg Stewart, former RACP Board member and former President of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine gave a keynote address at the launch of the [MJA-Lancet Countdown report on health and climate for Oceania for 2023](#).
  - The RACP also provided feedback on this year’s MJA-Lancet Countdown Policy Brief.
- **NSW Net Zero Roadmap** - Professor Lynne Madden, Chair of the MCAC, represented the RACP at a feedback session on the NSW Health [Draft Net Zero Roadmap 2024 - 2030](#).

## 4 Populations in Focus

### Paediatrics and Child Health

- **Care and protection** - ongoing efforts to promote recommendations within the [RACP Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services position statement](#) which call for the systems-change required to address the health care needs of our most vulnerable children. The RACP recently welcomed the [announcement](#) from the ACT Government that they will extend care leave support to the age of 21, a key recommendation of the position statement.
- **Early Years** - continued advocacy to improve children’s wellbeing and support children in the early years to thrive over the course of their lives, including the [RACP Submission](#) to the National Guidelines for including Mental Health and Wellbeing in Early Childhood Health Checks.
- **Immunisation** - [RACP Submission](#) to the Towards Australia’s National Immunisation Strategy 2025-2030 consultation paper, emphasising the importance of the next Immunisation Strategy addressing vaccine-related misinformation and mistrust.
- **Autism** - [RACP Submission](#) to the draft National Autism Strategy, emphasising the importance of measurable targets and outcomes, diagnosis by appropriate healthcare professionals; evidence-based multidisciplinary services; and exploring NDIS support and priority access to mental health service provision, especially for First Nations families.

## Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine

- **Youth Appropriate Health Care** - Youth Advisory Group meeting to focus on the best youth friendly health services.

## Sexual Health Medicine

- **National HIV strategy** - Federal Health Department request, RACP [submission](#) on the draft National HIV Strategy 2024-2030, focusing on efforts to reach zero HIV transmission, including in First Nations communities.
- **AChSHM advocacy** - in collaboration with the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), AChSHM have commenced an initiative to raise awareness of the clinical indicators for HIV testing and empower clinicians to offer a HIV test to all people who present with these conditions to rule out HIV.

## Rehabilitation Medicine

- **Binational Rehabilitation Position Statement** – RACP participation in a Rehabilitation Medicine Society of Australia and New Zealand (RMSANZ) led workshop to discuss issues impacting the profession, particularly barriers to high quality care and the value and awareness of rehabilitation medicine. This will inform the RACP's position statement.

## Palliative Medicine

- **Opioid shortages** - advocacy activities continue, including meetings with TGA and Medicines Australia to discuss potential solutions to the problem of medication supply in Australia.

## Addiction Medicine

- **Opioid dependence** – co-signed letter from RACP, the RACGP and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to the Federal Minister for Health, The Hon Mark Butler MP, advocating for the implementation of a special access program for long-acting injectable buprenorphine in opioid dependence for very vulnerable people.

## Silicosis

- Refreshed [Silicosis](#) webpages on the RACP website, including College reform asks.
- A key achievement after long and persistent advocacy has been the establishment of the [National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry](#), making notifications mandatory for silicosis by Occupational and Environmental Medicine Physicians and Respiratory and Sleep Medicine Physicians and storing data on occupational respiratory diseases in Australia.

## Disability

- New resources on the RACP website: [RACP recommendation uptake](#) in the Disability Royal Commission report, and [Uptake of RACP Recommendations](#) in the NDIS Review Final Report.

# Aotearoa New Zealand

## Workforce

- **Health Minister meeting** - Aotearoa NZ President Dr Hamish McCay, Chair of the Māori Health Committee Dr Matt Wheeler and the Policy and Advocacy team met with Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health. Dr Reti indicated that the health workforce is the most important issue for him. Issues around working conditions, culturally safe homegrown workforce growth and overseas trained physicians were explored. Engagement will continue on these issues, particularly opportunities to attract physicians home to Aotearoa New Zealand and workforce wellbeing.



*Pictured L-R: Dr Hamish McCay, incoming AoNZ President & AoNZ P&A Cttee Chair, Dr Matt Wheeler, Chair, Māori Health Committee and P&A team with Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health*

- **Ministry of Health engagement** - meeting with the Ministry of Health to support expanded RACP engagement, particularly around workforce data.
- The Aotearoa New Zealand Policy & Advocacy Committee has been considering ways to understand better the reasons for Aotearoa New Zealand members leaving the country and what would entice them to return, to support ongoing Government advocacy and engagement.
- **Medical workforce data** - The P&A team also facilitated a presentation on medical workforce data by the Ministry of Health to the Aotearoa New Zealand and Māori Health Committee Joint Hui.

## Recent Submissions

- Submission to Medical Council of New Zealand's consultation on their draft statement "*Treating yourself and those close to you*", intended to help doctors why, in most situations, they should not treat themselves or those with whom they have a close relationship. Members agreed that it is best for people not to manage family members or those close to them, but questioned the view that this should not be an absolute "no" in certain situations, e.g. in rural clinics where there is no possible alternative and the many reasons Māori find themselves isolated and/or with reduced options for care.

## State and Territory Advocacy

### NSW/ACT

- The RACP responded to a Summons from the [NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding](#), further to the RACP's earlier [submission](#), requiring extensive work to provide a wide range of material relating to accreditation, education, training and workforce advocacy and a meeting with the Commission Inquiry Team.
- Confirmation from the NSW Minister for Health that the RACP would be involved in the upcoming NSW Drug Summit in December 2024.

### Northern Territory

- Members of the NT Committee and P&A team met with the Hon Selena Uibo, Minister for Health. The focus of the meeting was on physician workforce and wellbeing.



*Pictured L-R: Dr Rosalie Schultz, NT Cttee, Samuel Dettman, SPO, P&A, Timothy Bowen, Acting Executive General Manager, P&A, Dr David Carroll, NT Cttee trainee rep with Selena Uibo, NT Health Minister & Katherine Economides, SEO, SA/NT, MES*

### Queensland

- Representatives from the RACP's Queensland Committee met with the Queensland Shadow Minister for Health and Ambulance Services Roslyn Bates MP to discuss workforce, physician wellbeing, accreditation and overseas trained physicians.
- Ongoing engagement with the Queensland Minister for Education and Youth Justice around the RACP's concerns about the detainment of young people in adult custodial facilities including police watch houses.

## South Australia

- Assistant Minister for Autism, the Hon Emily Bourke invited the RACP to participate on an Advisory Committee following the release of the [SA Autism Strategy](#).

## Victoria

- [Media release](#) in support of the *Youth Justice Bill 2024* which was introduced into the Victorian Parliament to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years of age. The statement was featured on the National Indigenous Radio Service and Koori Radio.
- RACP representatives attended a Victorian Department of Health briefing relating to the proposed restructuring of the Victorian Health System.

## Western Australia

- The Parliamentary Select Committee into Child Development Services published its [final report](#) in April 2024, with extensive coverage of RACP engagement. The RACP provided a submission to the Inquiry and Prof Nitin Kapur appeared at an Inquiry hearing.

## Submissions and endorsements

- RACP endorsement of ANZCA PG09(G) Guideline of procedural sedation
- RACP feedback on MJA-Lancet Countdown Policy Brief
- Proposal to establish a National Centre for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing
- [RACP Submission to the TGA on Medicines Shortages in Australia - Challenges and Opportunities](#)
- [RACP submission to Department of Social Services on the draft National Autism Strategy](#)
- [RACP submission to Independent Hospital Pricing Authority \(IHPA\) regarding its Consultation Paper on the Pricing Framework for Australian Public Hospital Services 2025-26](#)
- [RACP feedback on the draft Ninth National HIV strategy 2024-2030](#)
- [RACP submission to Department of Health and Aged Care on the discussion paper "Towards the National Immunisation Strategy 2025-2030"](#)
- Endorsement of FARE Shared Statement on regulation of harmful and addictive product marketing
- [RACP submission to Draft NMHC National Guidelines for including mental health and wellbeing in Early Childhood Health Checks](#)
- [RACP Submission to the Medical Council of New Zealand Statement on Treating yourself and those close to you](#)
- [RACP Brief to inform the Unleashing the Potential of our Workforce Scope of Practice Review - Overview of the role of physicians and paediatricians in the Australian Government's primary care reform](#)

## Media and advocacy

### April media coverage

- [Physicians call for health lens to tackle youth justice issues](#) | The Guardian Liveblog | April 4
- Professor Nitin Kapur, PCHD President appeared across multiple media outlets following the publication of the college [media release](#) addressing youth justice concerns | 5 April
- [More than 1100 children charged under new bail laws in Queensland](#) | National Indigenous Times, April 9



### More than 1100 children charged under new bail laws in Queensland

Dechlan Brennan - April 9, 2024

In a submission to the Queensland parliament's youth justice reform select committee, **the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) recommended the age of criminal responsibility be raised to at least 14 "with no exceptions".**

It also recommended no children - of any age - be imprisoned in adult settings, as well as a health assessment for all children entering custodial facilities.

"Incarceration should only ever be in purpose-designed and purpose-built environments where proper health care (including specialist medical care) and suitable social supports are provided," the RACP submitted.

RACP submitted

## April media releases

- [Key to addressing youth justice is to treat children as kids not criminals - Physicians | 5 April 2024](#)
- [New research finds less than half of fibromyalgia patients are using evidence-based medication to help manage symptoms due to high costs | 19 April 2024](#)

## May media coverage:

- [ACDC done dirt cheap would be a dirty deed: RACP | Health Services Daily | 8 May 2024](#)
- [Federal budget must deliver on climate health and the Centre for Disease Control, sector leaders warn | Croakey | 9 May 2024](#)
- [A rolling wrap of reaction to the Federal Budget, and key health issues | Croakey | 14 May 2024](#)

# CROAKEY HEALTH MEDIA

Informed, engaged communities for health

## Federal budget must deliver on climate health and the Centre for Disease Control, sector leaders warn

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has also warned that without adequate funding, the Australian CDC would not be effective in reducing the burden of preventable diseases on communities and the economy.

"We had long advocated for an Australian Centre for Disease Control but what we don't want to see is for it to become ineffective through under-funding and limited scope," RACP President-elect Professor Jennifer Martin said in a statement.

Martin stressed the importance of the CDC taking an integrated approach to addressing communicable and non-communicable diseases.

- [The AI horse has already bolted | Health Services Daily | 16 May 2024](#)
- [New Australian health security unit to work with intelligence agencies to combat biological threats like Covid-19 | The Guardian Liveblog | 17 May 2024](#)
- [Families forced to wait up to three years to see paediatric specialists, or pay hefty costs for city appointments | ABC News Online | May 18](#)



**ABC NEWS**

### Families forced to wait up to three years to see paediatric specialists, or pay hefty costs for city appointments

ABC South East SA / By Liz Rymill  
Posted Sat 18 May 2024 at 1:54pm, updated Sat 18 May 2024 at 1:57pm

Maddison Wood has spent thousands accessing specialist care for her sons Jack and Ripley. (Supplied)

### Shortage bites nationwide

(Supplied)

According to the **Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)**, there is no shortage of interest in specialist paediatric positions; it says the limiting factor is available government funding to expand specialist training programs.

"Unfortunately there remains a significant shortage of non-GP specialists in many rural and regional areas," president Jacqueline Small said.

Dr Small said the RACP administered about 380 specialist training program positions across Australia, but "this number of places is unlikely to be enough to address the under-resourcing in regional areas".

- [GP reform needs more nurses, hotlines and no fax machines](#) | The Medical Republic | May 21
- [The ethical case for importing unapproved drugs](#) | The Medical Republic | 22 May 2024
- [Shortages a 'major vulnerability'](#) | Australian Journal of Pharmacy | 23 May 2024
- [Peak medical body calls for urgent action to address medicine shortages](#) | The Guardian Liveblog | 23 May 2024

23 May 2024 08:12 AEST

**Peak medical body calls for urgent action to address medicine shortages**

 Melissa Davey

The **Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)** is calling for urgent action to address medicine shortages that can put lives at risk and leave patients without effective substitutes.

RACP's president, **Prof Jennifer Martin**, said medicine shortages are becoming more of a problem in Australia.

**■ ■ We need to see a comprehensive strategy from the government about how to prevent shortages and how to manage them better when they do occur. Australia is particularly vulnerable because we import around 90% of our medicines.**

Physicians across specialties are seeing shortages of medicines required for children with neurodevelopmental disorders; children and adults with obesity, diabetes or endocrine issues; palliative care patients; patients with cardiac conditions; patients with sexually transmitted and other infections; and patients with substance use disorders.

**■ ■ Government needs a better strategy to redirect existing critical medicines supplies within the country to priority groups and patients. Current approaches often get very difficult for both patient and physician and need to be fixed, urgently.**



■ A customer waits at a counter at a pharmacy in Canberra. Photograph: AAP

- [Pharma rewards to boost supply?](#) | Pharma in Focus | 24 May 2024
- [Medicine shortages that affect our most vulnerable are unacceptable](#) | The Sydney Morning Herald | 26 May 2024
- [Calls to increase medicine manufacturing in Australia as nation faces shortage](#) | The Daily Telegraph | 26 May 2024
- [Australia's medicine shortages impacting more than 400 drugs](#) | Nine News Online | 26 May 2024
- [Australia's medicine shortage risks leaving menopausal women without options](#) | Women's Agenda | 27 May 2024
- [Drug shortages put Aussies at risk](#) | Your Life Choice | 27 May 2024
- [Medicines Australia calls for legislation change and transparency to address drug shortages](#) | Health Industry Hub | 31 May 2024

## May media releases

- [Upcoming Budget must focus on improving health equity and strengthening healthcare system](#) | 3 May 2024
- [Centre for Disease Control needs a major funding boost in Federal Budget, doctors warn](#) | 8 May 2024
- [Federal Budget funding for Urgent Care Clinics misses opportunity to ease growing strain on hospitals with timely specialist physician care](#) | 20 May 2024
- ['We can't let patients suffer' - RACP calls for Government strategy to tackle medicines shortages](#) | 23 May 2024

## June media coverage

- [Women not routinely screened for pregnancy prior to chemoimmunotherapy, Aussie study reveals | AusDoc | 14 June 2024](#)
- [Hope after a fall get up and go for a walk | The Examiner | 20 June 2024](#)
- [Doctor wants a farmer: love keeps medics in the bush | AAP | 22 June 2024](#)

**AusDoc.**

### Women not routinely screened for pregnancy prior to chemoimmunotherapy, Aussie study reveals

Professor Nada Hamad says assessing pregnancy status before treatment should be standard care.



*Pictured: Professor Nada Hamad, FRACP*

## June Media releases

- [Paediatricians encourage Victorian Opposition and crossbench to support raising the age of criminal responsibility | 28 June 2024](#)
- [The RACP says South Australia's preschool investment is a big win for child health and development | 12 June 2024](#)
- [New research reveals concerning minority of women of childbearing potential screened for pregnancy prior to cancer treatment | 06 June 2024](#)

## Government and Stakeholder meetings

April to June 2024

<b>Total Meetings</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>State/Territory Government</b>	<b>3</b>
		<b>Medical Body</b>	<b>5</b>
		<b>Government agency</b>	<b>2</b>
		<b>Other</b>	<b>2</b>
		<b>Federal Government</b>	<b>10</b>

Meetings with health sector stakeholders included:

- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA)
- Australian Medical Association
- Healthscope
- Independent Hospital and Aged Care Pricing Authority
- Medicines Australia
- Rural Doctors Association of Australia
- NSW Government
  - Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding
  - Medical Workforce team
- Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care officials:
  - Working Better for Medicare Review team
  - Australian interim CDC Establishment Taskforce team
  - Environmental Health and Climate Change team
  - National Health, Sustainability and Climate Unit
  - Primary and Community Care team
  - Tobacco and E-cigarette Control team