

# POLICY & ADVOCACY REPORT

**Q3 July to September 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.

## Table of Contents

Highlights .....	2
Stakeholder meetings.....	3
Media and advocacy .....	4
Submissions and endorsements .....	8
CPAC Plan Focus Areas .....	8
1 First Nations Health and Equity .....	8
2 Workforce and health reform .....	8
3 Climate.....	11
4 Populations in Focus .....	12
Aotearoa New Zealand.....	16
State and Territory Advocacy .....	18

*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.*



### 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](mailto:policy@racp.edu.au)** (Aus)  
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## Highlights

### Workforce and Health Reform

- **Your Workforce, Your Say survey** sent to all College members to explore possible workforce advocacy priorities and responses to emerging healthcare issues.
- Meeting with the **Medical Deans Australia & New Zealand (MDANZ) CEO & President with Director NHS England Director NHS England Long-Term Health Workforce Plan** to discuss workforce challenges.
- **The RACP and The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)** supported an **outright ban on all forms of gambling advertising** in their joint position statement, [Prevention and Treatment of Gambling-Related Harm](#).
- The RACP [submission](#) to the Inquiry to Diabetes influenced the [final report](#) recommendations, endorsing College advocacy for longer MBS consultations, supporting telehealth, improved multidisciplinary care models, stronger media regulations for junk food advertising and consideration of a sugar tax. **Widespread media coverage featuring the RACP President Prof Jennifer Martin on saline IV and other medicines shortages** supporting ongoing medicines advocacy.

### Climate Change and Health

- **RACP** joined the Australian Government's **Climate & Health Expert Advisory Group**, which provides expert input on the implementation of the Australian National Health and Climate Strategy.
- The President presented at the annual Australian Medical Association and Doctors for the Environment Australia ('DEA') [webinar](#), "Climate Change and Sustainability: Leadership and Action from Australian Doctors".

### State and Territory

- Members of the **RACP Tasmanian Committee met the Tasmanian Health Minister** where they discussed workforce shortages, urgent recruitment to junior medical officer positions, effective measures to support physician and trainee wellbeing, and more.
- **The RACP Northern Territory Committee** developed an [election statement](#) and secured valuable responses from both major parties. RACP Northern Territory Interim Chair, Dr Kirsty Neal, published an [op-ed in Croakey Health Media](#).

### Populations in Focus

- Following advocacy to the **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)** from Policy & Advocacy and a collection of RACP paediatrician members, "paediatricians" are now listed as health professionals who can provide best practice evidence of disability for several diagnostic conditions under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
- The RACP published a [media release](#) urging the Federal Government to rethink child protection and youth justice, following an [AFIS report](#) revealed radical reform is needed to improve systemic issues.

# Stakeholder meetings

July to September 2024

		Stakeholder	
Total Meetings	15	State/Territory Government	2
		Medical Body	6
		Government Department / agency	5
		Other	2

Meetings with health sector stakeholders listed below took place in July to September, discussing shared interests and ensuring ongoing engagement.

- Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP)
- Australian Medical Association (AMA)
- AVANT
- Australian and New Zealand Association of Neurologists (ANZAN)
- Consumer Health Forum (CHF)
- Healthcare Management Advisors (HMA) consulted RACP on Rural Generalists
- Royal Australasian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- Safe Work Australia
- Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care:
  - Environmental Health and Climate Change team
  - Opioid Dependence Treatment team
  - Australian interim CDC Establishment Taskforce team

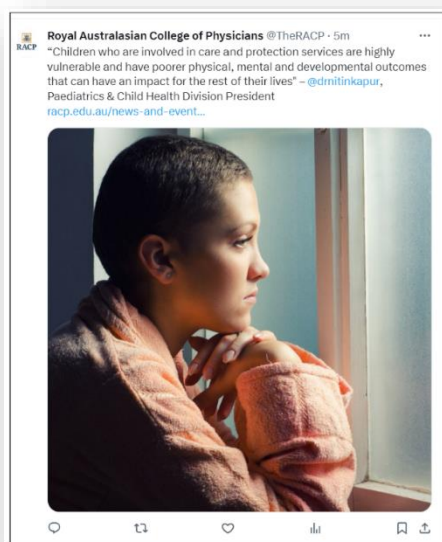
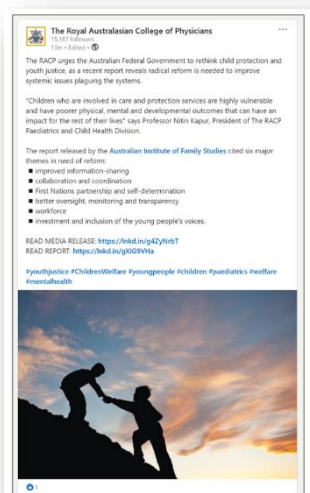
## Media and advocacy

### July media coverage

- [Why surgeries could be cancelled across Australia from next week](#) | 7News | 30 July 2024
- [Australia is facing a shortage of 'crucial' IV fluids. What does it mean and who will be affected?](#) | The Guardian | 28 July 2024
- [The supply of IV fluids is expected be 'constrained' until the end of the year. Here's what we know so far](#) | ABC News | 27 July 2024
- ['Grinding halt': shortage could cause hospital chaos](#) | Australian Associated Press | 26 July 2024
- [Australia's Health Sector Braces For Potential IV Fluid Shortage](#) | International Business Times | 26 July 2024
- [Disabled children kept 'in cages' in police watch houses, Australia's children's commissioner says](#) | The Guardian | 23 July 2024
- [Zero-silica move a win: manufacturer](#) | Otago Daily Times (\$) | 20 July 2024
- [Experts call for the end of "tough on crime" electioneering](#) | Croakey | 19 July 2024
- [New research reveals Indigenous people "significantly less likely" to receive medical care recommended in National Hepatitis B Strategy](#) | National Indigenous Times | 18 July 2024
- [The Zap: warm up with the latest in health and aged care news -- and check out these consultations now open](#) | Croakey | 15 July 2024
- [The Zap: don't miss the latest in health and aged care news](#) | Croakey | 8 July 2024
- [Banned engineered stone over silicosis lung risk, alliance urges Government](#) | New Zealand Herald | 4 July 2024

### July media releases:

- [Child and adolescent physicians express grave concerns about Queensland children being detained in adult watchhouses](#) | 19 July 2024
- [Indigenous Australians significantly less likely to receive medical care recommended in National Hepatitis B Strategy - New research](#) | 18 July 2024
- [RACP welcomes positive signs on protecting telehealth access to specialists, but there is more to do](#) | 9 July 2024
- [Physicians urge Government to swiftly adopt recommendations of diabetes inquiry to support patients](#) | 4 July 2024
- [Physicians say radical reform is needed to address systemic issues in child protection](#) | 2 July 2024



## August media coverage

- [Calls for national action to end imprisonment of children, amid further pressure on Northern Territory Government's plans to criminalise young children](#) | Croakey | 30 August 2024
- [Dr Louise Woodward featured in As fossil fuels industry welcomes change of government in Northern Territory, the Middle Arm project raises many health concerns](#) | Croakey | 29 August 2024

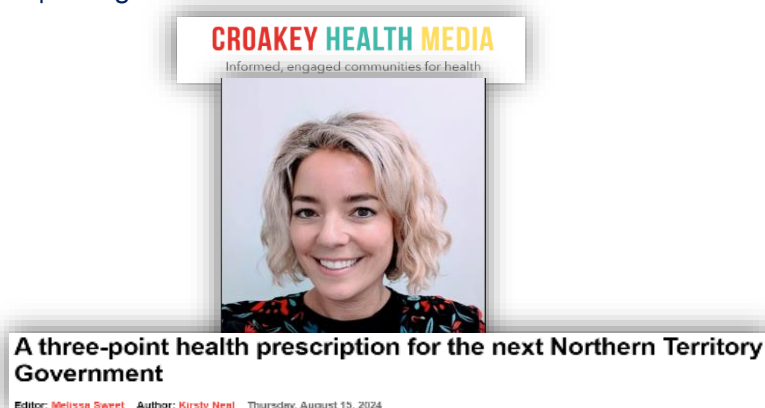
As Darwin paediatrician **Louise Woodward** wrote to the inquiry:

“Our hospitals are struggling to cope with the burden of disease now. The Middle Arm development is likely to increase acute and chronic disease for a population which already has some of the worst health outcomes in the country.”

- [Professor Nitin Kapur, PCHD President featured in Children waiting more than three years to see a paediatrician as wait times balloon out in WA public health](#) | The West Australian (AAP) | 27 August 2024



- [What does a national IV fluid shortage mean?](#) | The New Daily | 22 August 2024
- [Psychiatrists and physicians call for ban on gambling ads](#) | The Guardian Liveblog | 20 August 2024
- [Interview on climate change and health, zoonoses, and monkey pox](#) | Sky News | 15 September 2024
- [IV shortages ease, but constraints likely for months](#) | The West Australian (AAP) | 16 August 2024
- [Interview on climate impacts on health and healthcare systems](#) | Sky News | August 2024
- [A three-point health prescription for the next Northern Territory Government](#) | Croakey | 15 August 2024
- [Premier walks back support for raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14](#) | The Age | 11 August 2024
- [‘Huge potential impact’: Expert warns global saline shortage could be a ‘big problem’](#) | Sky News | 4 August 2024





## August media releases:

- [Psychiatrists and physicians call for a ban on gambling advertising in new joint position statement](#) | 20 August 2024
- [1 in 10 hospital deaths in Australia are from blood clots – new research reveals a better way of preventing them after common surgeries](#) | 19 August 2024
- [NT physicians say next Northern Territory Government must address health workforce shortages, improve Indigenous children's health, and combat climate change](#) | 7 August 2024
- ['Healthcare hardly mentioned in Government's disability report' - Physicians](#) | 1 August 2024

## September media coverage

- [Antimicrobial resistance could be one of the biggest threats to human health](#) | ABC 7.30 | 26 September 2024
- [Here are five ways the government could demolish barriers to early learning](#) | The Sector | 23 September 2024
- [NT chief minister says government has 'mandate' to lower age of criminal responsibility, despite Productivity Commission warning](#) | ABC News | 17 September 2024
- [NT won't waver on lowering criminal responsibility age](#) | Daily Mail Australia | 17 September 2024
- [Peak medical group expresses "grave concern" over NT plan to drop age of criminal responsibility to ten](#) | National Indigenous Times | 13 September 24
- [Māori health leaders demand government kill Treaty Principles Bill](#) | RNZ | 12 September 2024
- [Indigenous doctors join chorus of concerns about Northern Territory plans to lower age of criminal responsibility](#) | Croakey | 10 September 2024
- [For children's safety, every conversation matters](#) | Croakey | 5 September 2024

### Indigenous doctors join chorus of concerns about Northern Territory plans to lower age of criminal responsibility



**Introduction by Croakey:** The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Australian Medical Association NT, SNAICC – the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, the CEO of the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP), Amnesty International, ANTAR and many leading health professionals and human rights advocates have sounded the alarm about the Northern Territory Government's plans to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10.

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## September media releases:

- [Leading health organisations urge Australian Government to not miss opportunity for a world class Centre for Disease Control](#) | 30 September 2024
- [Universal early childhood education and care system key to positive health outcomes](#) | 20 September 2024

- [10-year-old children shouldn't be put in jail" - Paediatricians write to new NT Government](#) | 13 September 2024
- [Treaty Principles Bill a grave concern for Māori health: peak physicians body](#) | 12 September 2024

## Submissions and endorsements

### July

- Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand
  - [Joint RANZCP/RACP Position Statement on Prevention and Treatment of Gambling-Related Harm](#)
- Australia
  - [Public Hospital Pricing Framework](#)

### August

- Australia
  - [Northern Territory Election Statement](#)
  - Endorsement: Medicare Provider Billing and Claiming Journey Map
  - Endorsement: Joint Article on climate change and health with RCP and RCPSC
  - [Thrive by Five Early Childhood Guarantee Bill](#)
  - Endorsement: Opioid use guidelines in custodial settings
- Aotearoa New Zealand
  - [Climate Change Response \(Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations\) Amendment Bill](#)
  - [Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee on Land Transport \(Drug Driving\) Amendment Bill](#)
  - [Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease Guidelines](#)

### September

- Australia
  - [Health checks for late career doctors](#)
  - Endorsement: Paediatric Prescribing Position Statement
  - [National Disability Strategy](#)
  - Endorsement: Electric Hospital Retrofit Program
  - Feedback provided on Health Facility Guidelines
- Aotearoa New Zealand
  - [Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Bill \(No 2\)](#)



## CPAC Plan Focus Areas

### 1 First Nations Health and Equity

- Over 13 submissions, media releases and position statements, raising awareness about First Nations specific health issues.
- Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan approved. It will be launched in Reconciliation Week 2025.
- Planning for the launch of the Deadly Doctors LinkedIn Group.
- Planning for PRIDoC 2025. There are 15 registered First Nations RACP members attending the conference. Members from the ATSIHC, including the Chair and Deputy Chair, will also be attending.
- 430 RACP members (inclusive of First Nations and Allies) provided feedback about 'workforce advocacy top line goals' that contribute to First Nations justice and health equity in Australia, as part of the 'Your Workforce, Your Say Survey'. Feedback from the survey will assist ongoing work to develop the First Nations Justice and Health Equity Advocacy Strategy 2025 – 2028, which will support the ongoing implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Framework.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee

- The RACP welcomed the appointment of two new community members to ATSIHC:
  - Dr Kate Armstrong (RACP Fellow and Public Health Physician with NACCHO)
  - Ms Tania Brown (a proud Wonnarua woman from the Hunter Valley region).
- Dr Elkie Hull was appointed Deputy Chair at the ATSIHC meeting on 25 October 2024.
- ATSIHC provided advice and feedback in support of key projects across all RACP departments, including the AMC/ MCNZ Re-accreditation Project, the Culturally Safe Supervision Project, the Education Governance Review, and the Training Provider Standards Review. Much of this work related to 'cultural safety' and how the RACP can work more effectively to support the aspirations and outcomes of First Nations people in Australia.
- The ATSIHC has also reviewed and approved a set of 'culturally safe attributes and behaviours' that incorporate the 'cultural safety domains' in the Professional Practice Framework. Following review and approval by the MHC, an implementation plan will be developed to communicate these 'attributes and behaviours' across the broader membership. This work is key to achieving the College's objective of 'Indigenising and decolonising' by embedding First Nations and Māori knowledge and ways of knowing across the College, and to accelerate culturally safe change.

### 2 Workforce and health reform

- **Diabetes** - RACP has welcomed the [report recommendations](#) by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care & Sport following the Inquiry into Diabetes as a major win for people living with diabetes and obesity across Australia. The RACP [submission](#) influenced the final recommendations, endorsing existing College advocacy for longer

MBS consultations, supporting telehealth, improved multidisciplinary care models, stronger media regulations for junk food advertising and consideration of a sugar tax. It was followed up by a related [media release](#) calling for urgent implementation of the recommendations.

- **Telehealth** - In July we published a [media release](#) urging the Federal Government to progress the recommendations of the MBS Review Advisory Committee's [MBS Review Advisory Committee – Telehealth Post-Implementation Review – Final report](#) which contained several recommendations supporting access to specialists via remote consultations and encouraged further engagement and reform.
- **Gambling** - RACP published a joint [position statement](#) with RANZCP calling for an outright ban on gambling advertisements. The publication of the position statement was accompanied with a [media release](#).
- **Workforce survey** - The Health Care Reform Team drove completion of the 'Your Workforce Your Say' survey that aimed to identify member workforce advocacy priorities and direction. The survey was open to Australian members between 14 August 2024 to 15 September 2024. The survey obtained 739 responses, including quantitative indicators and rich qualitative data to inform workforce advocacy priorities and next steps for CPAC consideration.
- **CDC** - We continued to push for a well-funded, jurisdictionally linked, and operational Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) for communicable, non-communicable and occupational diseases, coordinating with partner organisations and publishing a combined [media release](#) with the PHAA, ASID, and Climate and Health Alliance calling upon the Government to urgently implement the centre. This work builds on our 2024 Federal Pre-Budget submission calls, and a related May Federal Pre-Budget [media release](#) calling for expedited implementation of the long-awaited permanent CDC.
- **Healthcare funding** - We advocated for fair and equitable contributions between the Federal and jurisdictional governments for optimal integrated care in our [submission](#) to the Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority's Pricing Framework for Australian Public Hospital Services 2025-2026 consultation. We underscored 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.
- **Medication shortages** - Supported proactive media from RACP President Professor Jennifer Martin that received wide traction and pick up on saline IV and other medicines shortages as a contribution to ongoing systemic medicines advocacy, the need for boosted national and international responses as well as proactive TGA mechanisms. Examples as follows:
  - [Australia's Health Sector Braces For Potential IV Fluid Shortage](#)
  - ['Grinding halt': shortage could cause hospital chaos | Daily Mail Online](#)
  - [The supply of IV fluids is expected to be 'constrained' until the end of the year. Here's what we know so far - ABC News](#)
  - [Australia is facing a shortage of 'crucial' IV fluids. What does it mean and who will be affected? | Health | The Guardian](#)

- [Why surgeries could be cancelled across Australia from next week | 7NEWS](#)
- [IV shortage eases, but constraints likely for months | The West Australian](#)
- [What does a national IV fluid shortage mean?](#)



*Video Credit: Professor Jennifer Martin, PRACP speaking on Sky News.com.au.  
High potential impact: Expert warns global saline shortage could be a 'big problem'.*

- **Physician assistants / associates** - We initiated work on the issue of physician assistant/associates (PAs) following concerns from members and in particular trainees prompted by a recent Queensland hospital service issuing a proposal to further roll out PAs in emergency department settings<sup>1</sup> and developments in the UK where the role of PAs in the healthcare system has recently been the subject of significant debate.<sup>2,3</sup> Key work to date has consisted of a high level background paper on PAs presented at the July 2024 College Trainees' Committee (CTC)

<sup>1</sup> Note: This business case is not publicly available but it has been referred to in the media. See for example: [Fury over Queensland physician assistant proposal - Medical Republic](#), [Queensland physician assistants paid more than junior doctors - Medical Republic](#), [Queensland Health extends deadline for physician assistant feedback - Medical Republic](#) and [Qld physician assistant plan on hold, not axed, says minister | The Courier Mail](#)

<sup>2</sup> See for example: [Physician associates: Parliament was "misadvised" on RCP's support for regulation, fellows say | The BMJ](#), [Independent inquiry finds serious governance failures at the Royal College of Physicians of London | The BMJ](#) and [Independent Learning Review undertaken by the King's Fund](#)

<sup>3</sup> Note: NHS England's [NHS Longer Term Workforce Plan](#) includes a goal of establishing a workforce of 10,000 PAs by 2036/37 with a particular focus on targeting more PA roles towards primary care and mental health services. However this is in a context where the NHS proposes to double medical school places to 15,000 and increase clinical training places by almost 60,000

meeting; an update on PAs in an [to members by RACP President Prof Jennifer Martin highlighting key workforce issues](#); questions on PAs in the aforementioned Your Workforce, Your Say survey to gauge active Australian members' views and discussions with Queensland members, engagement with Government and other organisations including the Australian Medical Association (AMA), The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and Medical Deans.

- **Evolve** - We have progressed work on Evolve Top-5 recommendations guidance criteria to include acknowledgement of Specialty Societies co-benefits of low-value care practices and environment sustainability. The draft will be consulted with relevant College members including the Climate Change and Health Working Group and Evolve Policy Advocacy Interest Group.
- **Antimicrobial resistance** - In September, the RACP President was featured in an [SBS interview on the importance of reducing antimicrobial resistance](#). Addressing antimicrobial resistance and recommending a reduction in low value prescribing practices are fundamental to many Evolve Top-5 recommendations including those by the [Australasian Society of Infectious Diseases](#). We continue to advocate for Evolve Top-5 recommendations to reduce low-value care and contribute to tackling antimicrobial resistance via [social media](#). We are collaborating with CSIRO in promoting Evolve and the [CSIRO antimicrobial resistance education hub](#).

### 3 Climate

- RACP President Professor Jennifer Martin presented at the annual Australian Medical Association and Doctors for the Environment Australia ('DEA') [webinar](#), "Climate Change and Sustainability: Leadership and Action from Australian Doctors".
- RACP President and Chair of the Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee, Professor Lynne Madden accepted invitations to join the Australian Government's Climate & Health Expert Advisory Group (CHEAG) to provide expert input into the implementation of the Australian National Health and Climate Strategy. They attended the first CHEAG meeting in August.
- The RACP endorsed the [Joint Statement: Working together to achieve sustainable high quality health care in a changing climate](#) developed by the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control and the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care.
- RACP President spoke about climate impacts on health and healthcare systems and about the connections between climate change and zoonotic disease on two Sky News interviews.
- Dr Emma-Leigh Synnott, member of the RACP Climate Change in Health Working Group, presented at the August Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine Policy and Advocacy meeting, sharing the RACP's recent climate change and health work and discussing the importance of climate health action for rehabilitation medicine practice.
- The [NT Election Statement](#) had a strong climate focus, which was also reflected in a related [media statement](#) and [op-ed](#).

## 4 Populations in Focus

### Paediatrics and Child Health; Adolescents and Young Adult Medicine

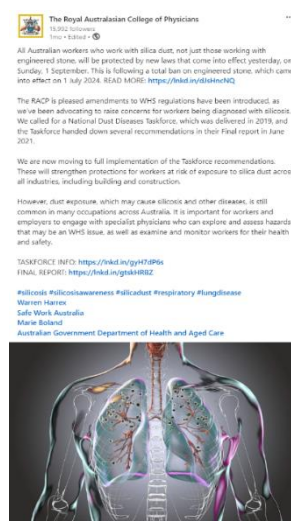
- **Early Years** - ongoing advocacy to address inequities in early childhood that impact long-term health outcomes and life trajectories has continued through:
  - A [submission](#) in August to the draft Thrive by Five Early Childhood Guarantee Bill 2024, which outlines the RACP support for the principles and intent of the draft Bill to create a universally accessible early childhood development system for all Australian children.
  - A review of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) final report, '[A path to universal early childhood care and education](#)', released in September. The report highlights the importance of ECEC to child health and wellbeing, outlining twelve (12) key recommendations and significant reforms required to achieve universal access to ECEC. Many of the recommendations in the final report focus on addressing inequitable access to ECEC and strongly aligns with the recommendations outlined in the [RACP submission](#) to the Inquiry.
- **Youth Appropriate Health Care** - The RACP Working Group of the Youth Appropriate Health Care position statement met recently to refine the draft recommendations and discuss how best to embed the views of the Youth Advisory Group into the work. Working Group members are now refining content for the draft statement.

### Sexual Health Medicine

- **ACHSHM advocacy** - Meetings were held with the Australasian Society of Infectious Diseases (ASID) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) to continue AChSHM initiative with the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) raising awareness of clinical indicators for HIV testing to increase opportunistic HIV testing and reduce rates of undiagnosed cases of HIV.

### Occupational Respiratory Diseases

- **National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (NORDR)** - physicians from Occupational and Environmental Medicine and Respiratory continue to be involved in the operationalisation of the Registry and members are participating in trials on various aspects with the Department of Health and Aged Care.
- **National body** - with the expansion of the national Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Council to include silicosis, the RACP has written to Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations of Australia, to promote RACP member inclusion on this national body.





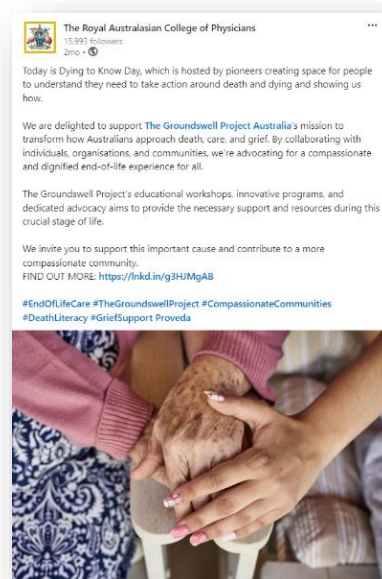
- **Silica dust advocacy** - the RACP social media platforms were used to remind stakeholders of worker health issues for those who work with silica dust, not just those working with engineered stone, considering new legislation introduced in September. The RACP spokesperson on silicosis, Dr Graeme Edwards, spoke on ABC radio regarding aspects of the Australian ban on engineered stone in view of additional Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations for high-risk crystalline processes across all industries.

## Workforce health

- **Improving the health of health care workers** – the Working Group for this project met in September to discuss the key content of the guidance document. This work is also contributing other components of RACP advocacy on workforce issues.
- **Value of occupational and environmental medicine (OEM) in health care** – the Working Group for this project met in August to refine its draft of a position statement, which aims to give a more complete understanding of the role of OEM in healthcare organisations.

## Palliative Medicine

- **End of life decision-making** - A small group of paediatric palliative physicians conducted a literature search as part of a policy scoping process to determine whether the 2008 RACP document Decision-Making at the End of Life for Infants, Children, and Adolescents required an update. The search revealed sufficient resources already existed and the AChPM Committee decided not to proceed with an update to the 2008 document. Thanks go to the following members for their assistance in the scoping project: Dr Nicole Armitage, Dr Emily Chang, Dr Naomi Katz, and Dr Vanessa Tung.
- **Dying to Know Day** - in August, the RACP supported Dying to Know Day, an initiative by the Groundswell Project to transform how Australia approaches death, care, and grief. Several social media posts enabled the RACP to help advocate for a more compassionate and dignified end-of-life experience for all.



## Rehabilitation Medicine

- **Collaboration with SafeWork Australia** – a meeting with SafeWork Australia CEO, Marie Boland, and team members, plus the RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin, along with representatives from AFRM, AFOEM, and Policy and Advocacy, was held in July. Topics discussed included consultations, strengthening research, enhancing injury prevention strategies,

and developing new health monitoring protocols in partnership with organisations. The RACP offered to contribute to decision-making and targeted consultations, particularly in areas such as workers' compensation, injury prevention, and regulatory application.

- **Climate Change and Health** – Dr Emma-Leigh Synnott, member of the RACP Climate Change in Health Working Group, attended the August AFRM Policy and Advocacy meeting to provide updates on RACP activities and discuss key priorities, with a focus on climate change and its impact on health and rehabilitation practices.
- **Australasian Health Facility Guideline** - in September, the AFRM offered important [feedback](#) to the Australasian Health Infrastructure Alliance on the development of the Australasian Health Facility Guideline 610, with particular focus on rehabilitation care.

## Disability

- **Disability Royal Commission response** - in August, the RACP expressed disappointment in a [media release](#) regarding the Australian Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission. The RACP emphasised that healthcare for people with disabilities was inadequately addressed, underscoring physicians' crucial role in improving health literacy and patient outcomes.
- **Australian Disability Strategy** - in September, the RACP welcomed the opportunity to participate in reviewing the Australian Disability Strategy (ADS) 2021-2031 with a [submission](#) to the Department of Social Services. The RACP highlighted that many of its healthcare recommendations, included in the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review reports, were implemented. However, a significant number of its recommendations remain unaddressed. The RACP is committed to ensuring healthcare receives the same level of attention as other sectors like education, employment, and housing in future iterations of the ADS.

## Addiction Medicine

- **Letter to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) on the Draft Drug and Alcohol Program Research Strategy** - At the end of July 2024, the AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop, was alerted to a limited consultation from DoHAC on the Draft Drug and Alcohol Program Research Strategy. Professor Dunlop wrote a letter to DoHAC outlining concerns about the short timelines and lack of broader consultation with the RACP, the RANZCP and the RACGP and other relevant stakeholders particularly given the burden of disease of alcohol and other drug use. He has since received a response advising that his concerns will be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Research Centres and that further information will be provided on a plan to engage with relevant stakeholders.
- **Position Statement on the prevention and treatment of gambling-related harm and advocacy supporting an outright ban on all forms of gambling advertising with the RANZCP** - In August, the RACP and the RANZCP supported an [outright ban on all forms of](#)



gambling advertising<sup>4</sup> in our new joint position statement, Prevention and Treatment of Gambling-Related Harm.<sup>5</sup> The statement highlights the urgent need for legislative action to address gambling-related harm in Australia, emphasising the impact it can have on individuals, families, and support networks, including carers. The RACP and RANZCP are also calling on the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to remove barriers that prevent people from seeking treatment for addiction, stressing the importance of assessing, diagnosing, and addressing harmful gambling behaviour.

- **Advocacy to the Federal Minister for Health with RACGP and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) for a special access program for long-acting injectable buprenorphine for very vulnerable people** - In June, the RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin and the AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop, co-signed a letter from the RACGP President, Dr Nicole Higgins and the Acting CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Dawn Casey, to Minister Butler advocating for a special access program for long-acting injectable buprenorphine for very vulnerable people. The Minister responded to advise that the proposed program would be considered along with other potential options. In August, the RACP President and AChAM President met with the Department of Health and Aged Care to discuss this issue further. They confirmed that DoHAC is looking at the proposed model noting that there are some significant barriers from their perspective.
- **RACP endorsement of the National Prison Addiction Medicine Network's National consensus statement on opioid agonist treatment in custodial settings** – In August, the RACP endorsed the National Consensus statement on opioid agonist treatment (OAT) in custodial settings<sup>6</sup> developed by the National Prison Addiction Medicine Network. This statement aims to improve quality, consistency, and continuity of OAT for people who are incarcerated in Australia by promoting a nationally coordinated and evidence-based approach to OAT provision and identifying targets against which to monitor progress.
- **Continuing advocacy on the need for the Federal Government to update the National Guidelines for medication-assisted treatment of opioid dependence published in 2014** - In February 2024, a letter co-signed by AChAM, RACP, RACGP and RANZCP Presidents was sent to the Deputy Secretary, Primary and Community Care at DoHAC, requesting that the Department update the National Guidelines for medication-assisted treatment of opioid dependence published in 2014 with expert input from members of the three colleges. In April, we received a response from the Deputy Secretary advising us that she had asked her team to

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/psychiatrists-and-physicians-call-for-a-ban-on-gambling-advertising-in-new-joint-position-statement>

<sup>5</sup> [joint-ranzcp-racp-position-statement-on-prevention-and-treatment-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf](https://www.ranzcp-racp-position-statement-on-prevention-and-treatment-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2024.08.15.24312029v1.full>

engage with the Australian National Advisory Council on Alcohol and other Drugs (ANACAD) regarding the need and process for updates of the guidelines. In August, the AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop, wrote to the Chair of ANACAD, Professor Michael Farrell, regarding the need to update the *National Guidelines for medication-assisted treatment of opioid dependence* published in 2014.<sup>7</sup>

- **Finalising the Drug Policy Position Statement titled Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand** - The College's Drug Policy Position Statement titled Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand developed by the joint AChAM/AFPHM Drug Policy Working Group is being finalised following thorough consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

The purpose of this document is to provide the rationale and evidence for a health-focused approach to inform policy development by governments and organisations across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It covers the essential elements of an effective drug policy including educational, preventative and harm reduction measures, evidence-based treatment services and regulatory options to reduce harm associated with drug use. Once finalised and published, it will be used to strengthen the College and member' advocacy to governments and other key stakeholders in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Aotearoa New Zealand

- **Workforce advocacy** - The Aotearoa New Zealand membership has called for more support for members in terms of workforce advocacy. In response, the Aotearoa NZ Policy and Advocacy Committee has included this as a key item on its workplan, and the incoming Chair has indicated this is a key area of focus going forward. To support workforce advocacy, in recent months the Aotearoa P&A team have:
  - Met with the Ministry of Health General Manager of Workforce Policy to increase engagement between the RACP and Ministry on workforce issues.
  - Facilitated engagement between RACP and Te Whatu Ora Workforce, particularly around access to and exchange of workforce data .
  - Engaged in ongoing cross-College collaboration on workforce issues.

## Recent Submissions

- **Climate Change** - In August, the RACP submitted to the Primary Production Committee on the Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations) Amendment Bill. The Bill proposes removing all agricultural activities from the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme, removing the legislated pathway for achieving reductions in methane emissions consistent with The Paris Agreement. The RACP opposed this, considering the proposals in the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-guidelines-for-medication-assisted-treatment-of-opioid-dependence>

Bill a step backwards, and inconsistent with our positions on mitigating climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The RACP called upon the Aotearoa New Zealand Government to facilitate low carbon systems on food production, utilising all available legislative tools including the Emissions Trading Scheme.

- **Rheumatic Fever (RF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD)** - In the RACP [submitted](#) feedback on the draft 2024 Rheumatic Fever (RF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) Diagnosis and Management Guidelines, produced by the RF and RHD Guideline Steering Group at the University of Auckland (last updated 2014). Additional chapters have been included to promote culturally responsive practice and to provide specific guidance regarding the care and management of RHD in pregnancy, and developmentally appropriate care for rangatahi. Feedback was received from the Māori Health Committee and the Aotearoa NZ Paediatrics and Child Health Division (PCHD).
- **Drug driving testing** - In August the RACP [submitted](#) to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee on the Land Transport (Drug Driving) Amendment Bill which establishes a new regulatory framework to enable a compulsory random roadside oral fluid (OF) testing regime. While the RACP supported the harm reduction intentions of the Bill, members were concerned about a punitive approach to the issue which may result in a loss in of focus on funding for much needed prevention, impairment information and research.
- **Vaping regulations** - In September the RACP [submitted](#) to the Health Select Committee in Aotearoa NZ to support the proposals of the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Bill (No 2) aimed at preventing vaping uptake among young “never” smokers. These proposals included a ban on disposable vapes, significant increases in fines for sales to under 18s and proposed visibility / proximity restrictions on retail outlets. RACP noted enforcement capability will be crucial to ensure implementation of these restrictions.
- **Renewal process for people with ADHD** - In September the RACP [submitted](#) to Pharmac to support its proposal to remove the renewal criteria for stimulants methylphenidate, dexamfetamine and modafinil from 1 December 2024 which members believe will reduce both barriers to access and workforce pressures. Proposed changes will allow anyone starting on stimulant treatment which requires a Special Authority approval to receive funded treatment without requirement for this approval to be renewed. Also, anyone with a current or recent (expired in the last two years) Special Authority approval for these treatments will automatically be issued an approval that is valid without further renewal.

## State and Territory Advocacy

### Northern Territory

- The [NT Election Statement](#) was published and sent to major parties ahead of the 24 August election. We received responses from the Minister for Health and the Shadow Minister for Health. It was accompanied by a [media release](#) which was picked up by ABC Radio Alice Springs. Dr Kirsty Neal, Acting Chair of the NT Committee also had an opinion piece published in Croakey Health Media, "[A three-point health prescription for the next Northern Territory government.](#)"
- Correspondence was sent to the new NT Chief Minister and Health Minister requesting a meeting with the Health Minister to discuss the RACP's priorities and to express concerns about the new Government's proposal to lower the age of criminal responsibility to ten. This was followed by a [media release](#) about these concern and media in the [National Indigenous Times](#), [The Daily Mail Australia](#), [ABC News](#), ABC Darwin News Bulletin, Nine News Darwin and the ABC Darwin Breakfast program.

### Western Australia

- The Western Australian Committee Chair met with the Minister's Office about the Committee's child health and physician workforce priorities.
- The AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop, and the AChAM Committee WA Branch Convenor, Dr Craig Connelly, met with the WA Committee Chair to discuss the issue of [mandatory reporting requirements of drug dependent patients](#) under WA legislation and the operation of these requirements.

### NSW/ACT

- The RACP responded to a Summons from the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding for the provision of a wide range of material relating to accreditation, education, training and workforce advocacy, and met with the Commission Inquiry Team.
- In addition, Professor Inam Haq, RACP Executive General Manager, Education, Learning and Assessment, and Associate Professor Kudzai Kanhutu, RACP Dean, [gave evidence](#) on workforce issues at a hearing of the Inquiry.

### Victoria

- AChAM President, Prof Adrian Dunlop and A/Prof Solomon Menahem, Chair of the Victorian Committee, wrote to the Victorian Premier calling for urgent fulfillment of its long-standing commitment to establish a supervised injecting service in Melbourne CBD. Support was also expressed through social media channels for an open letter to the Victorian Premier making the same call.

## Queensland

- A workforce and member wellbeing advocacy focus group was held with a small and diverse group of Queensland members to have an in-depth conversation about their workforce and wellbeing challenges and possible solutions. The consultation feedback will feed into our national and state and territory advocacy planning. The event was hosted and facilitated by Queensland Committee members and other Queensland members and was supported by College staff.
- A [media release](#) was issued raising concerns about Queensland children being detained in adult watchhouses following media reports of a young First Nations girl being detained in an isolation cell at an adult watchhouse in Cairns by the Queensland Police Service.

## South Australia

- A/Professor Andrew Lee, SA Committee Chair, met with Prof Nicola Spurrier, SA Chief Health Officer and Dr Louise Flood, Deputy Public Health Officer, about concerns about proposed organisational changes to the Public Health Division of SA Health. A/Professor Lee discussed the need for increased investment in training public health physicians and a comprehensive review of the public health workforce to ensure adequate support and preparation for emerging public health challenges.
- The South Australian Salaried Medical Officers Association (SASMOA) met with the SA Committee Chair about a project with the McKell Institute focused on determining optimal medical staff-to-patient ratios for various specialties. The project aims to improve healthcare for South Australians and enhance training for resident medical staff. The SA Committee helped connect SASMOA with SA RACP members to gather their insights on the project.
- The College issued a [media statement](#) in welcoming the South Australian Government's commitment to expanding access to early childhood education through a \$715 million investment aimed at improving children's health and development, particularly for those at greatest risk of developmental vulnerabilities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

## Tasmania:

- Members of the RACP Tasmanian Committee met the Tasmanian Health Minister in his Launceston office. Interim Chair, Dr Theresa Naidoo, Associate Professor Heinrich Weber, Associate Professor Zhen Lim, and Dr Kristof Wing conveyed the challenges and opportunities raised by the broader Tasmanian membership. They discussed workforce shortages, urgent recruitment to junior medical officer positions, the need for a greater preventive health focus across state government policymaking, and effective measures to support physician and trainee wellbeing.



*Pictured: L-R back row: Associate Professor Heinrich Weber; Dr Kristof Wing; Nancy Smit, MES; Mr Samuel Dettman, P&A  
L-R front row: The Hon Guy Barnett, Tas Health Minister; Dr Theresa Naidoo; Associate Professor Zhen Lim*

- A workforce and member wellbeing advocacy focus group was held with a small and diverse group of Tasmanian members to have an in-depth conversation about their workforce and wellbeing challenges and possible solutions. The consultation feedback will feed into our national and state and territory advocacy planning. The event was hosted and facilitated by Tasmanian Committee members and was supported by College staff.