



RACP
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EDUCATE ADVOCATE INNOVATE

THE RACP COLLEGE POLICY & ADVOCACY COUNCIL

Annual Report 2024



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Introduction from the College Policy & Advocacy Council Co-Deputy Chairs

This is our first report as Co-Deputy Chairs of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians' (RACP) College Policy & Advocacy Council (CPAC).

In the short time we have been supporting this group as Co-Deputy Chairs, we have been impressed by our members' collaborative efforts and understanding of the importance of our policy and advocacy work. You give your time, specialty knowledge and experiences to develop strong positions and clear actions. Without your commitment and expertise, we could not deliver our healthcare policy priorities.

Together, we work towards achieving successful advocacy outcomes and the RACP's voice being heard at the highest levels in addition to being an important expert policy advisor for the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand governments. This year has been filled with opportunities to achieve those goals, and we have provided a summary of successful advocacy at the start of this report for you.

The [CPAC Plan 2022–2026¹](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/creating-equitable-and-healthier-communities-College-policy-and-advocacy-council-plan-2022-2026.pdf?sfvrsn=141cca1a_6) focuses our policy and advocacy work around key priority areas. It also focuses on advocating for improvements to our healthcare system and broader health and social policy. We aim to achieve our goal of improved and equitable health outcomes for all in our community. In the following pages are highlights of the last 12 months (Oct 2023–Oct 2024) from CPAC member RACP bodies and CPAC's work plan.

CPAC is key to connecting with members across the RACP and is founded on the expertise and respect for our Fellows and trainees within our health community. It is outlined in our Constitution as core business of the College. It is our member engagement that allows us to support specialty and region-led activities and is critical to the RACP being able to build on our past achievements. I hope together we can continue to strengthen the RACP's reputation as one of the leaders for healthcare policy advice to governments and other healthcare stakeholders.

Some of the key achievements aligned to the CPAC plan focus areas, showcased in this report include the following but be sure to read the whole report as policy and advocacy works across a wide range of areas.



First Nations health and equity

Throughout 2024, the RACP has made a significant contribution towards realising its ongoing commitment to First Nations' justice and health equity. Its work has covered an array of matters relating to First Nations' health equity, including Raise the Age, climate change, workforce advocacy, sexual health medicine, autism, medicine shortages, and access to early childhood health and development checks. See the First Nations health and equity section for more information, page 10.



Workforce and healthcare reform

Over the past twelve months, the RACP took a significant step towards defining advocacy efforts for matters that affect physicians, and therefore patients, within everyday working life and workplaces. This includes new policy on emerging workforce issues. It included significant consultation with RACP bodies, focus groups held in states and territories and the 'Your Workforce, Your Say' survey. This survey was widely promoted and well responded to by trainees and Fellows in a cross section of Australian states, territories, demographic areas, from both public and private sectors, as well as hospital and community care settings.

See the workforce and healthcare reform section for more information, page 13.

¹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/creating-equitable-and-healthier-communities-College-policy-and-advocacy-council-plan-2022-2026.pdf?sfvrsn=141cca1a_6



Climate change and health

Climate change and health advocacy hit a major milestone of our advocacy with the release of

Australia's first [National Health and Climate Strategy](https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-health-and-climate-strategy)² ('Strategy') in December 2023; a key recommendation of the RACP Healthy Climate Future Campaign. The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, previously acknowledged the RACP's successful advocacy in securing the Strategy. We have [welcomed the Strategy](https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-welcome-national-health-and-climate-strategy-and-call-for-its-urgent-implementation)³ and commend the release of a broad [Implementation Plan](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-09/national-health-and-climate-strategy-implementation-plan-2024-2028.pdf).⁴ We are advocating for urgent implementation, guided by the Strategy's principles, which include First Nations leadership, health equity and the right to health, and population health and prevention. See the climate change and health section for more information, on page 23.



Populations in focus

In the area of adolescent and young adult medicine, a Working Group is developing a position statement on

Youth Appropriate Health Care to improve the health care experiences of young people. The Working Group, under the guidance of a group of young people in the Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine Committee (AYAMC), are in the process of refining the draft position statement and the recommendations within, all of which are underpinned by a set of guiding principles. It is anticipated that the Youth Appropriate Healthcare position statement will be finalised and launched mid-2025. See the populations in focus section for more information, on page 29.

Professor Christian Gericke FAFPHM, FRACP and Dr Arnagretta Hunter FRACP Co-Deputy Chairs of the College Policy & Advocacy Council

CPAC and CPAC Executive Committee overview

The [College Policy & Advocacy Council](#)⁸ (CPAC) is comprised of 28 Fellows, trainees and consumer members representing the RACP's specialties, Indigenous groups, states and territories, consumer perspectives and expert individuals. It meets biannually to discuss and determine the RACP's focus and priorities for health policy and advocacy.

CPAC's Executive Committee (CPAC EC) is a nine-member email-based, rapid response group. Committee members are highly experienced in health policy with a focus on delivering the highest standard of policy and advocacy for the RACP and its members.

² <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-health-and-climate-strategy>

³ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-welcome-national-health-and-climate-strategy-and-call-for-its-urgent-implementation>

⁴ <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-09/national-health-and-climate-strategy-implementation-plan-2024-2028.pdf>

What the RACP has done this year

The College Policy and Advocacy Council (CPAC) Plan 2022–2026⁵ positions the RACP as a leading, evidence-based organisation on health policy.

It consists of four focus areas that reflect the broad scope of the RACP and six approaches supporting strong and effective policy and advocacy. It also now includes a strategic decision made by CPAC last year, which aimed to focus on more proactive work aligned with the CPAC Plan 2022–2026, including a new focus on workforce advocacy.

During the reporting period between October 2023 and October 2024, the CPAC EC considered the following number of matters. The total number was considerably higher than previous years, including at the peak of COVID-19 advocacy during the pandemic, reflecting the growing interest in RACP perspectives. To help manage the increasing number of matters, a new triage screening

step of incoming requests to Policy and Advocacy and subsequent no-go reporting to CPAC was introduced in 2024, to ensure limited resources are focused on key priority matters.

There were slightly less submissions in the 2024 period than 2023 (although still higher than pre-pandemic), which reflects the decision made by CPAC to focus on key CPAC priority areas. This is to maximise advocacy impact, and there were less government consultation opportunities available than the previous year where the incoming government sought a wide range of consultation. CPAC work outside key priority areas has been reduced according to strategy but is still extensive.



Aotearoa New Zealand matters

Number of RACP submissions: Seven (four in 2022–23)

Number of endorsements: One

Reporting period (12 months October–October)	Total number of matters considered	Number of submissions	Number of endorsements
2023–2024	308	41	19
Over the previous five years, CPAC EC have considered the following:			
2022–2023	260	60	11
2021–2022	173	42	21
2020–2021	205*	33	17
2019–2020	220*	28	24
2018–2019	183	37	28

* Higher than normal due to the extra work of the COVID ERG during the pandemic.

5 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/creating-equitable-and-healthier-communities-College-policy-and-advocacy-council-plan-2022-2026.pdf?sfvrsn=141cca1a_6



Position statements launched: Seven

- [PCHD: Updated RACP circumcision of infant males parent information sheet⁶](#)
- [RANZCP/RACP: Prevention and treatment of gambling-related harm⁷](#)
- [AChAM/AFPHM: Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand⁸](#)
- Federal budget [submission⁹](#)
- [Northern Territory election statement¹⁰](#)
- [Queensland election statement¹¹](#)
- [Tasmania election statement¹²](#)



First Nations Health and Equity

Increased access to specialist care, grow the First Nations Specialist workforce, uphold and advocate for Close the Gap Agreements in Indigenous Affairs and Māori and Pasifika health equity



Health Reform

Innovative and integrated care, better value care, a safe and well funded workforce, pandemic responsiveness and preparedness, prevention and public health



Climate and Justice

Advocating for a net zero health system, sustainable health care, refugee health, sexual health, raise the age, and supporting #make it the norm



Populations in Focus

Children and young people, healthy workers and workplaces, People with: rehabilitation, palliative care, or sexual health care needs, substance use disorders

- 6 https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.racp.edu.au%2Fdocs%2Fdefault-source%2Fadvocacy-library%2Fcircumcision-brochure-2024.pdf%3Fsfvrsn%3D64c5a11a_8&data=05%7C02%7CLara.McMurray%40racp.edu.au%7C87ab03775b9b459e875508dcf9654042%7C09c2d83fca574dad8a0b502b18e773e8%7C0%7C0%7C638659460476952478%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlloiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luZmZlLCJBIiwiaWQiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=HwVL8VrzWcIUWepfYWdxG3DV47NtxqqtwACEmwHPxiM%3D&reserved=0
- 7 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/joint-ranzcp-racp-position-statement-on-prevention-and-treatment-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf?sfvrsn=725cdf1a_4
- 8 [racp-position-statement-achieving-a-health-focused-approach-to-drug-policy-in-australia-and-aotearoa-new-zealand.pdf](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-2024-nt-election-statement.pdf)
- 9 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/upcoming-budget-must-focus-on-improving-health-equity-and-strengthening-the-healthcare-system>
- 10 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-2024-nt-election-statement.pdf>
- 11 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-2024-queensland-election-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=6aa3a11a_6
- 12 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-tasmanian-election-statement-2024.pdf>



Number of media releases, interviews and other engagements: 97 (74 in 2022–23)

MP/key stakeholder meetings October 2023 to October 2024

Total number of MP and stakeholder meetings	78 (46 for Jan 2023–Oct 2023)
Government engagement/meetings (federal/state/territory governments – ministers, MPs and departments)	41
Number of stakeholder engagements/meetings (medical body/other)	37



Work with other Australian College bodies

State and Territory Committee meetings: 24

Division, Faculty and Chapter meetings (Council and Policy and Advocacy Committees): 56



Parliament House, Canberra.

Key wins and highlights 2024

Workforce

The College Dean, Associate Professor Kudzai Kanhutu FRACP, was appointed as the RACP representative to the new Medical Workforce Advisory Collaboration (MWAC), guiding the implementation of the [National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021–2031](#).¹³

Governments on record supporting the RACP's workforce priorities – Queensland, Northern Territory, Tasmania and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Significant RACP contributions to [NSW Special Commission of Inquiry](#)¹⁴ into Healthcare Funding – via [submission](#)¹⁵ meetings and evidence.

Release of a short position statement about quality and safety considerations with physician assistants.

Pre-Budget submission

The Commonwealth committed funding towards College recommendations in the 2024 federal Budget including expansion of investment in multidisciplinary ambulatory care and outreach services for care of patients with complex and chronic conditions within local communities; extending funding of the bulk billing incentive to a broader range of priority groups; additional funding for Medicare Urgent Care Clinics to ensure their sustainability and investment in evidence-based multidisciplinary interventions to prevent and treat harms arising from AOD use in hospital and community-based care.

Medication shortages

The RACP leadership led ongoing engagement with TGA who is introducing improvements to Australia's medicine supply management and supporting the recommendations of the RACP submission.

Medicine shortages were raised as a priority for College Council this year given the cross-College impact.

Telehealth

The MBS Review Advisory Committee adopted RACP telehealth recommendations after many years of sustained advocacy.

Silicosis

A [National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry \(NORDR\)](#)¹⁶ was established in May 2024. New legislation prohibiting the manufacture, supply, processing and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs was also introduced on 1 July 2024 after sustained RACP advocacy.

NDIS

Following successful advocacy to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in July 2024, paediatricians are now recognised as healthcare professionals who can provide best practice evidence of disability for several diagnostic conditions under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

¹³ <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-medical-workforce-strategy-2021-2031>

¹⁴ <https://healthcarefunding.specialcommission.nsw.gov.au/>

¹⁵ <https://healthcarefunding.specialcommission.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/publications/Listing-of-Submissions-48/Submission-107-Royal-Australasian-College-of-Physicians.pdf>

¹⁶ [National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry](#) | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care URL <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/nordr>

Healthcare for veterans

Recommendations from the RACP ([submission](#))¹⁷ were adopted by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide ([final report](#)).¹⁸

Aged care

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) released draft guidance resources for providers and aged care workers, reflecting significant uptake of the 2022 RACP [submission](#)¹⁹ to the Review of the Aged Care Quality Standards.

Disability

Approximately half (17) of the RACP [35 recommendations](#)²⁰ were incorporated in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report.

Climate change and health

Many of the RACP's recommendations were incorporated into the [National Health and Climate Strategy](#)²¹, including a focus on Health in All Policies and whole-of-government approach.

RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP and Professor Lynne Madden FAFPHM, Chair of the Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee, were appointed to the Australian Government's Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group (CHEAG).

Social media and young people

RACP representatives attended the jointly hosted New South Wales and South Australian Governments Social Media Summit, which was held in October 2024.

Diabetes and obesity

Several of our campaign asks and key advocacy work was adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Diabetes. This includes the regulation of junk food media advertising, consistent with our [Switch Off the Junk campaign](#)²², and subsidised access to evidence-based pharmaceuticals, monitoring devices and bariatric surgeries for people living with diabetes and obesity.

Early childhood education and care

The South Australian Government committed to expanding access to early childhood education, with a \$715 million investment to improve children's health and development in June 2024. This aligns with the RACP [Kids Catch Up campaign](#)²³, which advocates for universal access to quality early childhood education programs for all three-year-olds.

17 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-royal-commission-into-defence-and-veteran-suicide.pdf?sfvrsn=70b3d31a_4

18 <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

19 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission_aged-care-q-s-stds.pdf?sfvrsn=aca7d11a_10

20 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-recommendation-uptake-in-the-royal-commission-into-violence-neglect-and-exploitation-of-people-with-disability-report.pdf?sfvrsn=5f48db1a_12

21 <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/national-health-and-climate-strategy.pdf>

22 <https://kidscatchup.org.au/switch-off-the-junk/>

23 <https://kidscatchup.org.au/>

Prevention and treatment of gambling-related harm

In August, the RACP and The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) supported an outright ban on all forms of gambling advertising²⁴ in our new joint position statement, Prevention and Treatment of Gambling-Related Harm.²⁵

States and territories

New South Wales: Members gave evidence to the *NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding*, advocating for investment in workforce resources, regional healthcare, First Nations health, preventive healthcare, and net-zero healthcare emissions by 2040.

Northern Territory: The College released an election statement calling for reforms to address workforce shortages, improve health outcomes, and address climate change, receiving positive responses from both major political parties.

Queensland: The College led a submission to the Queensland Youth Justice Reform Inquiry, advocating for paediatrician involvement and reforms to raise the age of criminal responsibility.

South Australia: The College welcomed the South Australian Government's \$715 million investment in early childhood education to improve health outcomes. The College was also invited to join the newly formed Autism Advisory Committee to guide the development of the South Australian Autism Strategy.

Tasmania: The College's Tasmanian Election Statement was positively received by all major Tasmanian political parties, focusing on workforce support and healthcare access. The Tasmanian Health Minister committed to annual meetings with the College and addressing workforce concerns, particularly in regional areas.

Victoria: The RACP issued a media statement supporting the *Youth Justice Bill 2024* introduced in the Victorian Parliament, which proposes raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years.

Western Australia: The College welcomed the Western Australian Government's \$39 million investment in expanding Child Development Services, including workforce support which we have advocated for.

²⁴ <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>

²⁵ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/joint-ranzcp-racp-position-statement-on-prevention-and-treatment-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf?sfvrsn=725cdf1a_4



First Nations justice and health equity



The RACP has made more than 25 submissions and media releases on many matters relating to First Nations health and equity.

This includes raising the age of criminal responsibility for children, climate change, workforce, sexual health, autism, medicine shortages, and access to early childhood health and development checks. These submissions and media releases were developed in consultation with key committees from across the RACP, demonstrating our strength in collaboration, as well as allyship across the RACP, that supports the need to address First Nations health inequities.

Key election statements in the lead-up to the Tasmanian, Northern Territory and Queensland state elections, sought action on First Nations health equity matters. This work was supplemented by the publication of pre-budget submissions to the Australian Treasury, advocating for funding reforms specifically relating to access to specialist medicine and health care for First Nations people and their communities.

Yoorrook Justice Commission

A highlight of Policy and Advocacy work contributing to First Nations justice and health equity in 2024 was the RACP response to the [Yoorrook Justice Commission's](https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/about/)²⁶ request for information about the First Nations paediatric workforce. The RACP's response to the Yoorrook Justice Commission supports its ongoing inquiries into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Nations people in Victoria. This is the first formal truth-telling process of its kind in Australia, which was set up by agreement between the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and the Victorian Government.

The Your Workforce, Your Say survey – First Nations outcomes



Through the Your Workforce, Your Say survey, members were asked to rank workforce advocacy top line goals that contribute to First Nations justice and health equity in Australia, including:

- attraction and retention of First Nations trainees (43 per cent of respondents ranked as top advocacy priority).
- improving access to medical specialists in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) (22 per cent of respondents ranked as top advocacy priority).

- improving cultural safety in healthcare, including culturally safe supervision (20 per cent of respondents ranked as top advocacy priority).
- working with First Nations Elders and communities to incorporate local knowledge and tailor specialist health services around community needs and priorities (19 per cent of respondents ranked as top advocacy priority).

43 per cent

of respondents ranked attraction and retention of First Nations trainees as top advocacy priority

A key insight arising from member feedback was the importance of allyship, which is needed to successfully influence change across the physician workforce and the healthcare system in Australia. The feedback from the survey will support the overarching objective of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee (ATSIHC) led 'Advocacy Strategy for First Nations Justice and Health Equity 2025–2028' (currently under development), which is to 'create a community of allies and First Nations members that support and advocate for positive change'.

²⁶ <https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/about/>

This also provides a foundation to progress key areas of work, including:

- the development of First Nations Engagement Principles, which can be implemented across the organisational structure of the College to guide culturally safe and appropriate engagement with First Nations members.
- the 'Deadly Doctor's' LinkedIn group – an online professional network of First Nations physicians, health organisations and allies, which can be used to leverage First Nations leadership, create a safe space for members to connect, promote opportunities to 'get involved' and share information.
- targeting our advocacy approach and developing specific asks relevant to each jurisdiction (Commonwealth, state and territory) that reflect the expectations of our members.

RACP Congress and Convocation 2024

At RACP Congress held in May, teams from across the College worked tirelessly to promote information about support for Indigenous trainees and Fellows, as well as work undertaken to support initiatives in alignment with the Indigenous Strategic Framework 2018–2028 (ISF).²⁷ In particular, the RACP hosted panel discussions on Indigenous women's excellence in medicine with Dr Kimberley Male, Professor Jaqui Hughes FRACP, and Dr Dawn Adair FAFRM. We also hosted a panel session on cultural safety with Dr Danny De Lore FRACP, Professor Phillip Mills OA, Dr Kimberley Male and Associate Professor Tamara Mackean FAFPHM. The panel discussions were led by Lee Bradfield, Manager, Indigenous Strategy and Nicky McCurdy, Kaitohutohu Ahurea.

Congress 2024 culminated in Convocation, highlighting the many achievements of our new and existing members. This year, The RACP celebrated the convocation of Dr Elkie Hull FRACP, a proud Gamillaraay woman and the first female Aboriginal paediatrician in Australia. We also celebrated the Honorary Fellowship of Professor Phillip Mills AO, a proud Kulkalgal man from the Torres Strait Islands and a longstanding member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee. The RACP also introduced new elements to improve cultural safety at the event, including a dedicated private space for First Nations members attending the ceremony.

The delivery of RACP Congress and Convocation 2024 were key pieces of work contributing to the delivery of strategies that support the realisation of First Nations justice and health equity in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Work to support the delivery of RACP Congress and Convocation also demonstrated the College's commitment to support First Nations and Māori aspirations and outcomes in alignment with Object 1.1.9 of the RACP Constitution.



Professor Jacqueline Hughes FRACP, Dr Kimberly Male ATSHIC Chair, Dr Elkie Hull FRACP and Associate Professor Tamara Mckeanan FRACP.

27 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/about/policies-and-guides/indigenous-strategic-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=629a0b1a_0



Workforce and healthcare reform

Federal budget

The RACP [2024 Federal pre-budget submission](#)²⁸ called attention to four key priorities of our member communities and their patients; health system reform, prevention, populations in focus, and sustainable and resilient environment.

The submission detailed critical challenges and solutions in areas such as healthcare workforce shortages, equitable access to healthcare, and the importance of preventive health measures that are now desperately lacking in Australia. Additionally, the RACP engaged with government representatives through strategic consultations and collaborated with key stakeholders in the health sector to amplify the concerns of the membership.

The RACP issued several media releases to promote our federal pre-budget submission and put the focus on specific federal pre-budget asks, for example, concerning the [Medicare Urgent Care Clinics](#),²⁹ the [Australian Centre for Disease Control](#),³⁰ and [physician workforce, telehealth items and models of care](#).³¹

Our efforts have prepared the RACP for robust advocacy by establishing key priorities, fostering relationships with policymakers, and building a platform for future federal budget discussions.



Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP presenting on Workforce at the National Health Workforce Summit.



YOUR WORKFORCE, YOUR SAY

²⁸ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/pre-budget-submission-to-the-australian-treasury.pdf?sfvrsn=4065d91a_6

²⁹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/federal-budget-funding-for-urgent-care-clinics-misses-opportunity-to-ease-growing-strain-on-hospitals-with-timely-specialist-physician-care>

³⁰ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/centre-for-disease-control-needs-a-major-funding-boost-in-federal-budget-doctors-warn>

³¹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/upcoming-budget-must-focus-on-improving-health-equity-and-strengthening-the-healthcare-system>

Telehealth

Our work on enhancing patient access to specialists, no matter where they are, continues with the welcome recognition of RACP telehealth and virtual care recommendations among decision makers and government bodies.

Earlier in 2024, the Hon Kirsty McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories acknowledged the RACP position in the media, and the benefits of specialist telehealth for regional, rural and remote Australian communities. This served as a platform to echo the RACP's position throughout levels of government.

Our telehealth and virtual care advocacy culminated in the concluding recommendations of the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) MBS Review Advisory Committee – Telehealth post-implementation review – Final report,³² which made several recommendations supportive of specialist telehealth, in particular to reintroduce subsequent consultant clinician telephone services and to maintain current MBS video telehealth items for initial consultations with non-general practitioner (GP) specialists.



RACP social media advocacy on telehealth.



³² <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/mbs-review-advisory-committee-telehealth-post-implementation-review-final-report?language=en>

Hospital funding

The RACP provided feedback³³ on the Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority's (IHACPA) consultation regarding the Pricing Framework for Australian Public Hospital Services for 2025–26. It highlights the overlooked costs associated with both admitted and non-admitted care, the financial implications of patient vulnerability and complexity – particularly in mental health services – and the continuing effects of COVID-19. Additionally, it emphasises the significance of service integration and the need to incentivise innovative care models.

This submission builds on our previous engagement with IHACPA considering its implications for key College priorities such as appropriate service funding, integrated care, healthcare reform and equitable access to health services.

The RACP submission³⁴ to the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding³⁵ highlighted the need to safeguard and invest in a safe and well-resourced medical specialist workforce. We called on the NSW Government to prioritise investment in the regional, rural and remote medical workforce, preventive healthcare, First Nations health and wellbeing, early childhood, aged care and disability.



Medicines shortages

The RACP advocated for change to the management of medicine shortages and discontinuations by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). This includes reforms to shortage communication arrangements, shortage prediction and planning tools, national medicines logistical plans to redirect critical medicines to priority groups in emergency settings, boosts international incentivisation and enhancing domestic medicines production.

A key contribution was a submission³⁶ to the TGA consultation, Medicines shortages: opportunities and challenges in Australia, which captured the perspectives of a broad cross-section of RACP specialty societies, Fellows of specific specialties and sub specialties. We amplified our calls with a media release³⁷ calling attention to our asks that was carried by multiple media outlets, including the SBS.³⁸

33 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-ihacpa-pricing-framework-for-australian-public-hospital-services-2025-26.pdf?sfvrsn=f2e1dc1a_4

34 <https://healthcarefunding.specialcommission.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/publications/Listing-of-Submissions-48/Submission-107-Royal-Australasian-College-of-Physicians.pdf>

35 <https://healthcarefunding.specialcommission.nsw.gov.au/>

36 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-tga-on-medicines-shortages-in-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=db7bdb1a_6

37 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/we-can-t-let-patients-suffer-racp-calls-for-government-strategy-to-tackle-medicines-shortages>

38 <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/from-stis-to-severe-pain-australia-has-a-medicine-shortage-problem/fxmaxepnj>

Further work occurred on the specific issue of IV fluid shortages. RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP, advocated for solutions-focused IV conservation strategies in print and screen media, including [ABC national news](#),³⁹ [The Guardian](#),⁴⁰ and [Sky News](#).⁴¹



Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP says healthcare workers can use alternative ways to deliver medications.

Source: [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](#)

The RACP continues to engage productively with the TGA on shortages, particularly to advocate for the systemic reforms we know are needed to better support member wellbeing in practice, reduce burnout and better support your patients with timely advice. This has become a priority of the College Council given its importance and applicability across the College.

The Your Workforce, Your Say survey



The RACP took a significant step towards shaping advocacy efforts for matters impacting individual physicians within everyday working life and workplaces with the launch of the Your Workforce, Your Say survey. The survey was widely promoted on all College member communication channels and forums and was well responded to, with trainee and Fellow representation across a broad section of Australian states, territories, demographic areas, from both public and private sectors, as well as hospital and community care settings.

The survey achieved its aim of identifying workforce policy priorities of importance to members and was designed to align with the goals of the [National Medical Workforce Strategy](#)⁴² (2021–2031), to ensure the concerns of RACP members are central to the future direction of healthcare policy in Australia.

³⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-07-27/iv-fluids-global-shortage-explainer/104147878>

⁴⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/jul/27/australia-is-facing-a-shortage-of-crucial-intravenous-iv-fluids-what-does-it-mean-and-who-will-be-affected>

⁴¹ <https://www.skynews.com.au/lifestyle/health/global-saline-shortage-affecting-australian-hospitals/video/5ac68e66385c084705edd3ccbd58cd53>

⁴² <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-medical-workforce-strategy-2021-2031>

Workforce policy priorities, views on expanding scopes of practice, the use of physician assistants, rural generalists, rural, regional and remote workforce needs were all raised by members and will inform advocacy going forward.



Dr Susannah Ward – President's Message November 2024

Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP discussing member wellbeing with Dr Susannah Ward FAFRM.



Associate Professor Kudzai Kanhutu FRACP discussing workforce with Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP.

Late career medical practitioners

The RACP engaged the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) with a [submission](#)⁴³ to the MBA's consultation on its Regulatory Impact Statement: Health checks for late career doctors.

The submission stressed the need for regulations that are reflective of workforce pressures, burnout and the costs borne by doctors and acknowledged the skills contributed by late career physicians to trainees, patients and local communities. We argued for scope of practice specific approaches, and for collaboration with the College and specialty societies in designing assessment tools and developing supportive resources and training for assessors.

Most importantly, we called attention to the need for clear support mechanisms, rehabilitative approaches and review mechanisms for physicians impacted by these proposed health checks.

⁴³ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-mba-health-checks-late-stage-career.pdf?sfvrsn=7390a11a_6

Scope of practice review

The College submitted a [brief](#)⁴⁴ to the Australian Government's [Unleashing the Potential of our Workforce – Scope of Practice Review](#)⁴⁵ emphasising the role of physicians' primary care and high-quality multidisciplinary care, in collaboration with GPs and allied health professionals. It covered multiple issues including the reasons why specialists need to be involved, current barriers to deliver better models of team-based primary/community care, examples of models of multidisciplinary care with medical specialists and funding models that drive and support best practice multidisciplinary care.



Australian Centre for Disease Control

The RACP has been at the forefront of advocating for the establishment of an Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) centring communicable, non-communicable and occupational disease, and all relevant physician disciplines for disease control in its operations.

This year saw us ramp up our advocacy at several key points throughout the calendar, including within the Australian Budget, where we renewed our calls for a well-funded, appropriately resourced and designed CDC.

We have had a pivotal role informing the national policy discourse on the CDC with other public health leaders, including the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID). Together we published two joint media releases ([here](#)⁴⁶ and [here](#)⁴⁷) to heighten our collective voice.

44 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/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.pdf?sfvrsn=4ed6dd1a_7

45 <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/scope-of-practice-review>

46 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/leading-health-organisations-urge-australian-government-to-not-miss-opportunity-for-a-world-class-centre-for-disease-control>

47 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/action-on-australian-centre-for-disease-control-now-more-urgent-than-ever-health-experts>

Obesity and diabetes

In 2024, we learnt that our advocacy to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport's Inquiry on Diabetes helped to reshape the conversation on obesity and diabetes. Our work included a [submission](#)⁴⁸ in 2023, hearing evidence from Professor Louise Baur FRACP and a [media release](#)⁴⁹ in 2024 echoing our calls to the Standing Committee and federal government.



The [Final Inquiry Report](#)⁵⁰ reveals our voice was heard on the need for better preventive policies and improved implementation of health reforms to manage the growing impact of these chronic conditions. The RACP called for consideration of a tax on sugar sweetened beverages, national regulation of junk food advertising to children, and improved models of ambulatory and multidisciplinary care for patients with obesity and type 2 diabetes in our communities. The inquiry's final recommendations adopted several key RACP prevention proposals, including the call for regulation of junk food media advertising consistent with the RACP Switch Off the [Junk Campaign](#)⁵¹ and implored the government to better organise the crucial medical reforms called for. The inquiry report remains before the federal government for consideration and response.

We also executed a wide-ranging social media campaign drawing awareness to obesity stigma in society and in medicine in the month leading up to World Obesity Day.

48 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/submission-to-the-parliamentary-standing-committee-inquiry-into-diabetes.pdf?sfvrsn=8344d41a_4

49 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-urge-government-to-swiftly-adopt-recommendations-of-diabetes-inquiry-to-support-patients>

50 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Health_Aged_Care_and_Sport/Inquiry_into_Diabetes/Report

51 <https://kidscatchup.org.au/switch-off-the-junk/>

Physician/Clinical Assistants

The Physician/Clinical Assistant and associate (PA) role was established in the 1960s in the United States to address issues of rural and remote access and disparity of healthcare in priority populations. The role also exists in other countries including Canada, the United Kingdom, Aotearoa New Zealand, and The Netherlands.

PAs are currently rare in Australia. In 2014, the first PA role was established in the public health sector in Queensland. In 2016, there were approximately 40 Australian trained PAs. The current numbers are not publicly available.

In response to concerns from trainees and Fellows about the potential introduction of PAs across the Australian healthcare system, the Policy and Advocacy Team developed an initial background paper to inform discussions with the College Trainees' Committee and other internal stakeholders to guide further work.

Following this initial background work, the RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP, issued a [statement](#)⁵² that was communicated to all RACP members via the [October President's Message](#)⁵³. She called on Australian governments to engage in comprehensive consultation with physicians before considering their introduction.



The statement emphasised that any use of PAs must prioritise patient safety, proper supervision, and integration with existing training and certification processes. Potential impacts of these roles on medical training for students and junior doctors was highlighted.

The RACP is also engaging with other Colleges and key stakeholders to inform further work on this issue and meetings have been sought at Commonwealth ministerial and departmental levels to discuss PAs and broader workforce issues.

Ethics

Guidance for members on moral distress

The RACP Ethics Committee has been developing a resource document for physicians and trainees to help understand and respond to workplace moral distress as a healthcare related risk. Moral distress is an important topic for medical practitioners and may be considered an occupational hazard. The guidance document describes the causes and impacts of moral distress, including on patients, colleagues and families, and distinguishes between similar concepts, such as moral injury or burnout. Consultation discussions have been held with the LGBTIQ+ community, disability community, and First Nations (Australia), mental health and violence, abuse and neglect experts to better inform the document.

Ethical specialist consultations using telehealth

The RACP Ethics Committee has also been developing a guidance document to aid physicians and trainees regarding ethical issues related to telehealth service delivery. Being a different medium for providing healthcare services, a range of ethical issues arise, including for priority population groups. This resource will be published

52 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/all-news/news-details?id=8211c0af-bbb2-61c2-b08b-ff01001c3177>

53 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/presidents-message/the-president's-message-4-october-2024>

in 2025. Information from consultation discussions with the LGBTIQ+ community, disability community, and First Nations (Australia), mental health and violence, abuse and neglect experts have been included in the document.

Evolve

Following the development and release of the Evolve Strategy 2022–26⁵⁴ and the Evolve Implementation Plan 2022–26,⁵⁵ the RACP has progressed several key activities in 2024.

The Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists Evolve Top-5 recommendations⁵⁶ to reduce low-value care have been refreshed after an extensive review process. The refreshed list will drive improved patient outcomes by promoting and implementing key Quality Use of Medicines principles by tackling low-value care in prescribing and medication management.



Work is well underway to update Evolve criteria with environmental sustainability co-benefits. We have engaged with the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care (DOHAC) on collaborative opportunities between DOHAC and Evolve in the low-value care and sustainability nexus.

We are refreshing the Evolve website⁵⁷, which will cover all Evolve Top-5 recommendations on low-value care. It will include extensive resources for implementation of the lists, a discussion about the co-benefits of Evolve and Climate Change and Health, and information on how to get involved with Evolve.

In 2024, Evolve Top 5 recommendations have been promoted at:

- RACP Congress: promotion of the most recent Evolve recommendations: Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) Adult,⁵⁸ Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion (ANZSBT),⁵⁹ Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM)⁶⁰ and Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology (ANZSN).⁶¹
- TSANZSRS Annual Scientific Meeting: promotion of the TSANZ Adult Evolve Top-5 recommendations.⁶²
- APSAD 2024: promotion of the AChAM Evolve Top-5 recommendations.⁶³
- ASCEPT–APFP–APSA Joint Congress 2024” promotion of the renewed ASCEPT Evolve Top-5 recommendations.⁶⁴

54 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/evolve-strategy-2022-26-final.pdf?sfvrsn=cc0bce1a_4

55 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/evolve/six-monthly-progress-report-jan-2024-evolve-strategy-implementation-plan-2022-2026.pdf?sfvrsn=f4a6dc1a_4

56 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/ascept>

57 <https://evolve.edu.au/>

58 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/thoracic>

59 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/anzsbt>

60 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/AChAM>

61 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/anzsn>

62 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/thoracic>

63 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/AChAM>

64 <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/ascept>



P&A Senior Policy Advisor Peter Lalli staffing the Evolve exhibition with Dr Mahsa Mirdamadi, RACP Respiratory Physician, 2024 TSANZ National Conference, Gold Coast.

Work is underway with the following College specialties on their renewal of Evolve Top-5 recommendations:

- [Human Genetics Society of Australasia](https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/hgsa)⁶⁵
- [Paediatrics & Child Health Division](https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/pchd)⁶⁶
- [Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine](https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/achshm)⁶⁷

In 2024, the RACP collaborated with the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Paediatric Society of New Zealand Gastroenterology Services Clinical Network on the development of new Evolve Top-5 recommendations to reduce low-value care.



AChAM President Professor Adrian Dunlop with RACP Policy & Advocacy staff Stephanie Wrightman at the APSAD 2024 conference promoting the AChAM Evolve Top-5 recommendation to reduce low-value care in addiction medicine.



RACP Policy & Advocacy staff Stephanie Wrightman and RACP trainee Dr Wilson Chong discussing the importance of AChAM Evolve Top-5 recommendations to reduce low-value care practices in addiction medicine.

⁶⁵ <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/hgsa>

⁶⁶ <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/pchd>

⁶⁷ <https://evolve.edu.au/recommendations/achshm>



Climate change and health



RACP continues to advise the Australian Government on climate health action

The health sector's decades of advocacy on climate change and health hit a major milestone with the release of Australia's first National Health and Climate Strategy⁶⁸ in December 2023. The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, has previously acknowledged the RACP's successful advocacy in securing the strategy. The RACP has welcomed the strategy⁶⁹ and commends the release of a broad Implementation Plan.⁷⁰ The College is also advocating for urgent implementation, guided by the strategy's principles, which include First Nations Leadership, health equity and the right to health, and population health and prevention.

RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP; and the Chair of the Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee, Professor Lynne Madden FAFPHM, accepted invitations to join the Australian Government's Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group⁷¹ (CHEAG), which has been set up to provide strategic advice to support the strategy's implementation.

New expert advisory group to support Australian Government protect our health from climate change

The Australian Government has established an expert advisory group to provide advice on reducing the impacts of climate change on the nation's health.



Expert advisory group to provide advice on reducing the impacts of climate change.

⁶⁸ <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-health-and-climate-strategy>

⁶⁹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-welcome-national-health-and-climate-strategy-and-call-for-its-urgent-implementation>

⁷⁰ <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-09/national-health-and-climate-strategy-implementation-plan-2024-2028.pdf>

⁷¹ <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/climate-and-health-expert-advisory-group-cheag?language=en>

The RACP has continued meeting with key officials in the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, emphasising our calls for close collaboration between Commonwealth, state and territory governments and for transparency and accountability in the strategy implementation process.

Following on from [the submission on the Australian Government's Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response discussion paper](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-alternative-commonwealth-capabilities-for-crisis-response-discussion-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=6786d61a_8)⁷² last year, the RACP has continued seeking broad engagement with the government. This reflects the RACP's commitment to healthcare in all policies and our advocacy for whole-of-government approaches to healthcare policy. This is particularly salient for climate change and health. Early in the year the RACP provided [advice to the Commonwealth Treasury](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-alternative-commonwealth-capabilities-for-crisis-response-discussion-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=6786d61a_8)⁷³ on focus areas for economic modelling on the health impacts of climate change, outlining the value in calculating cost savings that climate health action can bring about.

A key focus at the end of 2024 has been providing input into the Australian Government's Consultation Paper outlining plans for its first Health National Adaptation Plan. RACP members engaged in an online workshop and we plan to make a submission highlighting the importance of a whole-of-government approach to building climate resilience across Australia.



Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP speaking on climate change.



Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP leading a webinar on climate change.

72 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-alternative-commonwealth-capabilities-for-crisis-response-discussion-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=6786d61a_8

73 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-alternative-commonwealth-capabilities-for-crisis-response-discussion-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=6786d61a_8

Multi-College voice grows to play a leading role in National Health and Climate Strategy implementation

The Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee,⁷⁴ led by the RACP, has now grown to 14 member colleges. Each of these colleges are supporters of the Healthy Climate Future Campaign,⁷⁵ along with 14 specialty societies. The RACP began the year by hosting a consultation session facilitated by the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care on reducing desflurane and nitrous oxide within healthcare systems. Twenty-seven members from 10 medical colleges attended with RACP members providing input that centred patient care and health equity within emissions reduction approaches.

The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) is another important forum for medical college collaboration, and we provided the CPMC with a detailed brief on RACP and multi-college climate change and health policy and advocacy. Ensuring strong leadership from all medical colleges on climate change increases our ability to win funding and support for climate health action. Further, it's important for demonstrating to our members that doctors are playing a role in climate change and that this has benefits for population health and healthcare systems.

Medical college leadership was on display at the annual Australian Medical Association (AMA) and Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) 'Climate Change and Sustainability: Leadership and Action from Australian Doctors' webinar,⁷⁶ held in September. It was encouraging to hear about initiatives in training, policy, advocacy, and environmental sustainability across colleges, with RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP, presenting on our recent work.



Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP leading the AMA/DEA climate webinar.

The multi-college work has included direct engagement with the Australian Government. RACP delegates, led by the RACP President, attended a multi-college roundtable on climate change and health hosted by the interim Centre for Disease Control and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Following the roundtable, the RACP endorsed the Joint Statement: Working together to achieve sustainable high-quality health care in a changing climate.⁷⁷ We will continue pushing for reducing low-value care, optimising models of care, and increasing health workforce mobilisation to help build environmentally sustainable healthcare systems.

⁷⁴ <https://www.racp.edu.au/about/committees/climate-change-and-health-multi-College-advisory>

⁷⁵ <https://healthyclimatefuture.org.au/>

⁷⁶ <https://youtu.be/xl2kyOdmwUs>

⁷⁷ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-09/Joint-Statement-Working-together-to-achieve-sustainable-high-quality-health-care-in-a-changing-climate.PDF>

Healthcare sector collaboration: a win for climate health action

Support from medical colleges has been a growing strength of climate change and health advocacy in recent years. This builds on many years of research, policy, and advocacy work in the health sector more broadly. The RACP continues to collaborate with colleagues in government, advocacy organisations, and academia, including through our membership of the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA).

The RACP continued our successful partnership with the *MJA-Lancet* Countdown this year. Former RACP Board Director and Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHM) President, and current AFPHM NSW Committee Chair, Dr Greg Stewart FAFPHM presented at the [launch](#)⁷⁸ of the *MJA-Lancet* Countdown report on health and climate for Oceania for 2023.⁷⁹



Dr Greg Stewart FAFPHM, who opened the Lancet countdown public health, is presenting at Congress.



Launch event for the 2023 report for the *MJA-Lancet*.

RACP members were also engaged in numerous other stakeholder events and projects, including providing expert advice on the [NSW Health Draft Net Zero Roadmap](#)⁸⁰ and the CSIRO project on the impact of climate change on future communicable disease risks in Australia.

The RACP engaged in the Macquarie University Australian Institute of Health Innovation Research roundtable, advocating for research from a range of sources, and highlighting the need for a dedicated Climate Change and Health Resilience Research Fund. Members also attended Asthma Australia's second inhaler roundtable, focusing on reducing emissions from respiratory inhalers and transitioning to high quality, low-carbon asthma care. Further, the College recently endorsed [Healthy Futures' Electric Hospital Retrofit Program feasibility studies budget proposal](#)⁸¹ as part of their campaign to electrify hospitals across Australia.

This collaboration shares knowledge, strengthens and broadens our advocacy and our networks, and helps build complementary asks and strategies. It was this collaboration that helped ensure Health in All Policies was included in the National Strategy and will hopefully continue to grow our connections with stakeholders.

⁷⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70kKyfXKk>

⁷⁹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.5694/mja2.52245>

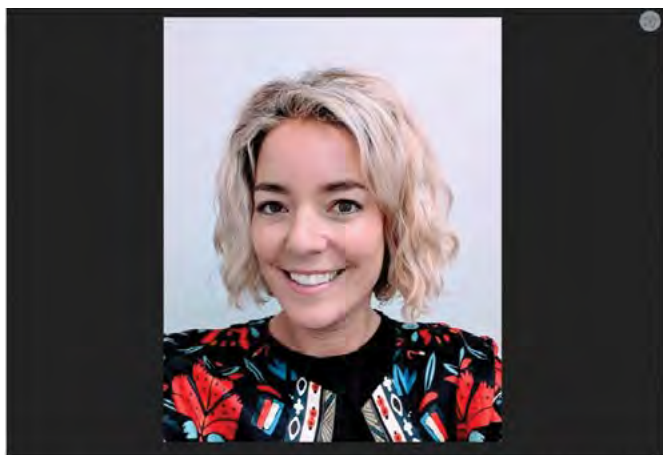
⁸⁰ https://hdp-au-prod-app-nsw-haveyoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/5617/1046/5323/Draft_NSW_Health_Net_Zero_Roadmap_-_FINAL.pdf

⁸¹ https://www.healthyfutures.net.au/media_release_hospital_electrification

Media interest in RACP climate experts a win for climate health advocacy

Growing media interest in climate change and health is both an opportunity and a success. It is an important mechanism for continuing to increase public engagement in, and support for, climate health action and positively reflects the impact that the RACP and the health sector has already had. The RACP released a climate-focused pre-budget [media release](#),⁸² which received significant media coverage including an ABC breakfast interview.

The RACP's [Northern Territory election statement](#)⁸³ had a climate focus. We released a [media statement](#)⁸⁴ and published an [op ed in Croakey Health Media](#)⁸⁵ by Dr Kirsty Neal FRACP, a member of the RACP's Northern Territory Committee.



A three-point health prescription for the next Northern Territory Government

Editor: Melissa Sweet Author: Kirsty Neal Thursday, August 15, 2024

In: NT election 2024, Climate emergency, Social determinants of health, Education, Housing, Justice and policing, Epidemic, Indigenous health, Global health, Reproductive health, Rural and remote health, Prevention

Dr Kirsty Neal advocating for Northern Territory health.

The RACP President also had the opportunity to discuss climate change and health on a Sky News television interview. The success of the interview led to a follow-up segment on the link between climate change and zoonotic disease. This was discussed alongside questions on the mpox virus, drawing on the work of the RACP's Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine.

Strong member engagement from specialties across Australia on climate

The RACP's ability to lead on climate change and health is driven by RACP member experts who are leaders in their fields. The depth and breadth of member knowledge and experience of how climate change is impacting and will continue to impact health and healthcare systems enables the RACP's meaningful engagement with governments and other stakeholders. The willingness of members to share their passion and expertise with their colleagues ensures that we have a growing number of members contributing to RACP submissions, events, and endorsements in climate change and health.

The Climate Change and Health Working Group (CCHWG) is the lead RACP body on climate change and health. The CCHWG brings together members from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, across numerous specialties, including paediatrics, cardiology, gastroenterology, and the RACP's three Faculties – Public Health Medicine, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, and Rehabilitation Medicine.

The CCHWG met in March and October to reflect on successes in the development of the National Strategy and consider gaps and challenges that need to be addressed in our future advocacy. Health and fossil fuels have also been a focus, with the CCHWG providing initial input into new directions for policy and research in this space. This work will guide future RACP advocacy on health and fossil fuels.

82 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/healthcare-system-not-prepared-for-extreme-weather-events-as-australia-continues-breaking-weather-records>

83 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-2024-nt-election-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=758adf1a_4

84 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/nt-physicians-say-next-northern-territory-government-must-address-health-workforce-shortages-improve-indigenous-children-s-health-and-combat-climate-change>

85 <https://www.croakey.org/a-three-point-health-prescription-for-the-next-northern-territory-government/>

We have undertaken preliminary work on leveraging the connections between our climate change and health work, and the RACP's Evolve⁸⁶ program, which aims to drive high-value care. Evolve has recommendations for reducing low-value care across 27 specialties and is an important mechanism for continuing to engage specialty societies in our climate change and health and environmental sustainability work. To see the latest information on Evolve, please refer to page 21.

Exciting period of transition for climate change and health work

The call for a National Health and Climate Strategy has been a longstanding recommendation for climate change and health advocates. The release of the strategy has changed the climate change and health policy landscape.

The RACP has seen this as an opportunity to reflect on our own environmental sustainability, led by the College's Shared Services team. We have plans to reinvigorate our Environmental Sustainability Task Force to embed our Environmental Sustainability Policy.⁸⁷ The RACP's Professional Practice team is progressing work on a climate change and health eLearning resource, and the Office of the Dean is establishing a Sustainability in Medicine Fellowship in partnership with NSW Health.

The importance of international collaboration has also been highlighted as we look to research, policy, and training innovations in other nations. This year we have worked with the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada on an article about the important role medical colleges have played in climate change and health, with Australia's National Strategy success highlighted.

We now have the space to shape climate change and health advocacy over the next few years. The CCHWG recognises that our future policy and advocacy must be driven by a commitment to Indigenous justice, climate justice, planetary health, and addressing the determinants of health through Health in All Policies and whole-of-government approaches. Fossil fuels and health, connections between biodiversity loss, climate change and health, and health co-benefits through climate-driven action to improve housing, diet, and active and public transport are areas we hope to explore. We look forward to working with members across RACP bodies and specialty societies in this next phase of our climate health work.

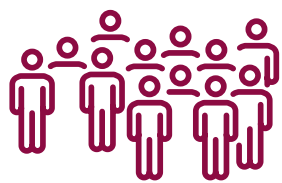


Climate change panel discussion at RACP Congress 2024.



⁸⁶ <https://evolve.edu.au/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.racp.edu.au/about/board-and-governance/governance-documents/environmental-sustainability-policy>



Populations in focus



Paediatrics and child health medicine

Members of the Paediatrics and Child Health Division (PCHD) continue engaging in key policy and advocacy activities relating to the health and wellbeing of children and young people, in alignment with the [RACP Child Health Advocacy Strategy 2022–2025](#).⁸⁸

The early years

The RACP has long advocated for the investment in the early years of children's lives, given the influence these formative years have on a child's life trajectory. Early childhood health and wellbeing issues have been at the forefront of the healthcare agenda this year, following the launch of the [Early Years Strategy 2024–2034](#)⁸⁹ by the Australian Government in May 2024, which the RACP provided significant input to.

In March 2024, the RACP provided a [submission](#)⁹⁰ to the NSW Inquiry into improving access to early childhood health and development checks.

In June 2024, the RACP provided a [submission](#)⁹¹ to the *Towards Australia's National Immunisation Strategy 2025–2030* and a [submission](#)⁹² to the *National Guidelines for including Mental Health and Wellbeing in Early Childhood Health Checks*.

88 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/child-health-advocacy-strategy-2022-25.pdf?sfvrsn=b581c91a_4#:~:text=The%20Child%20Health%20Advocacy%20Strategy%20will%20take%20a%20rights%2Dbased,entrenched%20and%20often%20intergenerational%20disadvantage.

89 <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services-early-years-strategy/early-years-strategy-2024-2034>

90 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-nsw-inquiry-into-improving-access-to-early-childhood-health-and-development-checks.pdf?sfvrsn=7aedd1a_4

91 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-towards-australia-s-national-immunisation-strategy-2025-2030.pdf?sfvrsn=8b68dd1a_8

92 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-national-guidelines-for-including-mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-early-childhood-health-checks.pdf?sfvrsn=856fdd1a_6

Neurodevelopmental child health

In the context of workforce and access challenges for developmental assessments, the RACP has actively advocated to improve access to developmental diagnosis and assessment, integrated care models, wraparound supports and workforce capacity via stakeholder meetings and public consultations. This includes the [RACP submission⁹³](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-tasmanian-inquiry-into-the-assessment-and-treatment-of-adhd-and-support-services.pdf?sfvrsn=1090a11a_4) to the Tasmanian Inquiry into the assessment and treatment of Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and support services in September 2024.

In July 2024, the RACP successfully advocated for the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to recognise paediatricians as healthcare professionals who can provide best practice evidence of disability for several diagnostic conditions under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS website has been updated to reflect this, and ongoing discussions with the NDIA are planned to identify how paediatricians can best provide expert advice.

Following the final recommendations of the Senate Select Committee on autism, the Australian Department of Social Services and Department of Health and Aged Care respectively developed a *National Autism Strategy* and a *National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People*. The RACP provided a [submission⁹⁴](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-draft-national-autism-strategy.pdf?sfvrsn=3fd0dd1a_4) to the draft National Strategy in May 2024, and a [submission⁹⁵](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-draft-national-roadmap-to-improve-the-health-and-mental-health-of-autistic-people.pdf?sfvrsn=6325d21a_4) to the draft National Roadmap in September 2024.

Healthcare of children in care and protection services

The health and wellbeing of children involved with care and protection services continues to be a concern among PCHD members. The RACP continues to promote the recommendations within the [RACP Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services position statement⁹⁶](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/health-care-of-children-in-care-and-protection-services-australia-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=6325d21a_4) through development of an advocacy plan aiming for urgent change to address systemic issues. The plan includes a key communications section to support [media statements⁹⁷](https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-say-radical-reform-is-needed-to-address-systemic-issues-in-child-protection) and briefs for meetings with cabinet ministers and stakeholders. This key messaging was used to develop several social media posts highlighting the RACP recommendations during National Child Protection Week in September 2024.



⁹³ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-tasmanian-inquiry-into-the-assessment-and-treatment-of-adhd-and-support-services.pdf?sfvrsn=1090a11a_4

⁹⁴ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-draft-national-autism-strategy.pdf?sfvrsn=3fd0dd1a_4

⁹⁵ [racp-submission-to-the-draft-national-roadmap-to-improve-the-health-and-mental-health-of-autistic-people.pdf](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-draft-national-roadmap-to-improve-the-health-and-mental-health-of-autistic-people.pdf)

⁹⁶ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/health-care-of-children-in-care-and-protection-services-australia-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=6325d21a_4

⁹⁷ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-say-radical-reform-is-needed-to-address-systemic-issues-in-child-protection>



Social media posted for National Child Protection Week 2024.

Social media and children and young people

The PCHD Committees have supported the development of a new document regarding social media and children and young people. This also aligned with a social media summit that was held in Sydney and Adelaide in October 2024, hosted by the New South Wales and South Australian Governments. Representatives included PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur FRACP, AFPHM President-elect, Dr Tony Gill FAFPHM and Chapter of Community Child Health Chair, Dr Paul Hotton FRACP.

Following the summit, the draft social media statement is being refined. The draft statement provides a set of recommendations as well as information on access and use of social media, benefits of social media, harms of social media, harmful content of social media, and a proposed way forward.



Pictured (L-R): PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur, AFPHM President-Elect, Dr Tony Gill, CCCHC Chair, Dr Paul Hotton

Adolescents and young adults

The Youth Appropriate Health Care Working Group, under the guidance of the Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine Committee (AYAMC) is refining a new position statement containing a suite of recommendations underpinned by a set of guiding principles to ensure healthcare services are delivering care appropriate for young people.

To ensure that this work truly reflects the health care needs of young people, and a first for the RACP – a Youth Advisory Group was established in January 2024. The Youth Advisory Group consists of 12 young people from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand aged between 18 to 28 years who have experience as young patients in the healthcare system. These young people bring with them perspectives from various cultural backgrounds, including two Rangatahi/Māori young people, varying experiences with consumer health groups and various lived experience.

Colleagues from the NSW Health Agency for Clinical Innovation have assisted with facilitation of the Youth Advisory Group meetings. They guided our young people through an appreciative inquiry process to share their experiences with the healthcare system. They analysed what works, what doesn't and what more is needed, to ensure that healthcare systems really meet the needs of young people. These contributions will be deeply embedded into the position statement.



Advocacy campaigns

Key campaigns in the paediatrics and child health medicine and adolescents and young adult spaces include RACP Kids Catch Up, RACP Switch off the Junk (both led by RACP), Thrive by Five and Raise the Age (both supported by the RACP).

Kids Catch Up



The Kids Catch Up campaign⁹⁸ continues to be a key advocacy tool calling on leaders from across the political spectrum to commit to a package of policy measures to help the nation's children catch up on key health and wellbeing matters. It aims to ensure that every child, no matter their circumstances, is given the opportunity to reach their full potential. This year, PCHD committees focused on shifting the campaign asks and supporting information away from COVID-19 and developing new material, which will be available on the campaign website by the end of 2024.

Aligning with the Kids Catch Up Ask #5 Implement universal access to quality early childhood education programs for all three-year-olds⁹⁹, in June 2024, the RACP welcomed¹⁰⁰ the South Australian Government's commitment to expand access to early childhood education with a \$715 million investment to improve children's health and development. In September 2024, the RACP welcomed¹⁰¹ the Productivity Commission's final report from its early childhood education and care inquiry and urged decision-makers to consult with paediatric and child health medicine experts in developing a policy response.

⁹⁸ <https://kidscatchup.org.au/>

⁹⁹ <https://kidscatchup.org.au/implement-universal-access/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/the-racp-says-south-australia-s-preschool-investment-is-a-big-win-for-child-health-and-development>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/universal-early-childhood-education-and-care-system-key-to-positive-health-outcomes>

In October 2024, the COVID-19 Response Inquiry Report supported the Kids Catch Up ask for a National Chief Paediatrician.

Switch Off the Junk



This mini campaign¹⁰² of the Kids Catch Up campaign continues to target the marketing and advertising of junk food to children. A focus of Switch Off the Junk includes the early involvement of the RACP and subsequent submission¹⁰³ to a feasibility study on options to limit unhealthy food marketing to children. The Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Diabetes adopted the campaign's call for regulation of junk food media advertising.



Thrive by Five

As a campaign partner since early 2022, the RACP continues to engage with the Thrive by Five campaign¹⁰⁴, which brings together key stakeholders in a movement to create systems change in early childhood. Thrive By Five is currently focused on their 'Make it Law' campaign, which aims to address early learning system issues and enshrine in law the right of every child to access early learning. Thrive By Five developed a draft Bill¹⁰⁵ the major activity of the campaign, which outlines the establishment of a national commission on early childhood development. An RACP submission¹⁰⁶ was developed, providing feedback on the draft Bill, supporting the principles and intent of the draft Bill and its aim to create a universally accessible early childhood development system for all Australian children.

Raise the Age and the health of children and young people in the youth justice system

The RACP is a founding member of the Raise the Age campaign and a member of the National Steering Committee.

At a national level, in a statement¹⁰⁷ leading up to the December 2023 Standing Council of Attorneys-General meeting, the RACP urged all Australian governments to agree to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years, later expressing¹⁰⁸ disappointment at their inability to reach consensus. The RACP also made a submission¹⁰⁹ to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system in October 2024.

¹⁰² <https://kidscatchup.org.au/switch-off-the-junk/>

¹⁰³ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-public-consultation-feasibility-study-on-options-to-limit-unhealthy-food-marketing-to-children.pdf?sfvrsn=38e6db1a_8

¹⁰⁴ <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Thrive-by-Five-Early-Childhood-Guarantee-Bill-2024.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-draft-thrive-by-five-early-childhood-guarantee-bill-2024.pdf?sfvrsn=9edde1a_4#:~:text=The%20RACP%20supports%20the%20principles,system%20for%20all%20Australian%20children

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/governments-must-listen-to-child-health-experts---physicians-call-for-national-agreement-to-raise-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-disappointed---failure-to-agree-on-raising-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility-is-a-missed-opportunity>

¹⁰⁹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-inquiry-into-australia-youth-justice-and-incarceration-system.pdf?sfvrsn=d9e6a11a_4

In addition to national advocacy, RACP state and territory committees also advocate for the health of children and young people in contact with the youth justice system in their respective jurisdictions, emphasising the need to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years without exception. Over the past year, several state and territory committees have been actively engaged in this important work.



Tony Rahman FRACP, wrote to the Hon Yvette D'Ath MP, Queensland Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, expressing concerns about detaining children in police watch houses and adult facilities. The RACP emphasised that children should only be housed in environments designed for their needs, with proper health care and social support.

The RACP also expressed grave concerns about Queensland children being detained in adult watchhouses in a [media statement](#)¹¹³ in July 2024, following troubling reports of a young child being detained in an isolation cell at an adult police watchhouse in Cairns.

Tasmania

The RACP [commended](#)¹¹⁰ the Tasmanian Government in December 2023 for announcing it will raise the age of criminal responsibility and called on the Tasmanian Government to pass legislation and deliver on its commitment.



Queensland

In February 2024, the RACP made a [submission](#)¹¹¹ to the former Youth Justice Reform Select Committee Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform in Queensland and subsequently issued a related [media statement](#).¹¹²

In March 2024, the PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur FRACP, and the Queensland Committee Chair, Professor

Victoria

The RACP [welcomed](#)¹¹⁴ the Victorian Government's move in June 2024 to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and urged all parties to back this critical reform for better health outcomes for children, especially First Nations youth. Unfortunately reports in August 2024 noted that whilst the government still plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to 12 years, it will not take that any further, despite its commitments to do so.

Northern Territory

In September 2024, the Northern Territory Committee wrote to the new Northern Territory Chief Minister, the Hon Lia Finocchiaro MLA, expressing serious concerns about the government's intentions to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 12 years to 10 years. The RACP also released a [statement](#)¹¹⁵ urging the Chief Minister to champion child health and refrain from lowering the age of criminal responsibility. The RACP subsequently issued a further [statement](#)¹¹⁶ condemning the passing of law in the Northern Territory to lower the age.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-commend-tasmanian-government-for-announcing-it-will-raise-the-minimum-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

¹¹¹ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/YJRSC-6004/YJRSC-54D8/submissions/00000171.pdf>

¹¹² <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/key-to-addressing-youth-justice-is-to-treat-children-as-kids-not-criminals---physicians>

¹¹³ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/child-and-adolescent-physicians-express-grave-concerns-about-queensland-children-being-detained-in-adult-watchhouses>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/paediatricians-encourage-victorian-opposition-and-crossbench-to-support-raising-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/10-year-old-children-shouldn-t-be-put-in-jail-paediatricians-write-to-new-nt-government>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/paediatricians-condemn-nt-law-lowering-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

COVID-19 related issues

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the RACP proactively safeguarded the health and safety of our members and the communities they served. As the heightened threat of COVID-19 subsided, governments focused on learning lessons with the launch of a number of inquiries that the RACP responded to. In 2024, these inquiries were complete with final reports.

In December 2023, the RACP made a [submission](#)¹¹⁷ to the Australian Government's COVID-19 Response Inquiry, which underscored critical insights gained from the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasised the need for nationally coordinated pandemic preparedness planning that includes the needs of priority populations and those disproportionately affected by health inequities. The final report, released in late October 2024, identified issues raised by the RACP around mental health and wellbeing impacts on healthcare workers, vaccine communication/education, the benefits of telehealth and the importance of the public health workforce. The final report made recommendations in line with RACP calls for further Australian Centre of Disease Control development, national emergency preparation planning, national medical stockpile funding, investment in long-COVID monitoring, a National Chief Paediatrician and a focus on the mental health of children and young people.

The RACP COVID-19 activity was led over the years by the cross-College COVID-19 Expert Reference Group (COVID ERG), however with COVID-19 now considered endemic across much of the world, the COVID ERG was formally closed following the lapse of its Terms of Reference in July 2024. We thank every member that served on the COVID ERG, providing their time and expertise to contribute to the RACP's efforts to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all RACP members, staff and the community since 2020.

Addiction medicine

Advocacy on NSW Drug Diversion scheme

In February 2024, the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM) led a [media release](#)¹¹⁸ welcoming a new drug diversion scheme rolling out in NSW as a positive step towards treating drug use as a health issue and reducing drug harm. It expressed concerns about the scheme allowing police discretion, which evidence shows can lead to inequitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and a range of other community groups.



Advocacy to the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care with RACGP and NACCHO for a special access program for long-acting injectable buprenorphine for very vulnerable people

In June 2024, the RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP and AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop FACHAM, co-signed a letter with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) President, Dr Nicole Higgins and the Acting CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Dawn Casey, to the Minister for

¹¹⁷ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-commonwealth-government-covid-19-response-inquiry.pdf?sfvrsn=16fbd91a_8

¹¹⁸ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/new-drug-approach-in-nsw-welcomed-by-addiction-medicine-experts>

Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, advocating for a special access program for long-acting injectable buprenorphine for very vulnerable people.

Minister Butler responded to advise that the proposed program would be considered along with other potential options. In August 2024, the RACP President and AChAM President met with the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care staff responsible for the delivery of the opioid dependence program to discuss this issue further. They confirmed the Department is looking at the proposed model.

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 2024, the RACP and The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) supported an outright ban on all forms of gambling advertising¹¹⁹ in our new joint position statement, Prevention and treatment of gambling-related harm.¹²⁰ The newly-released 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 the RANZCP are also calling on the federal, 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.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
RACP August 21

"There is often a very clear and close link between gambling and comorbid mental health conditions. Other medical conditions can be part of the addiction issue and can develop as the addiction progresses" said Professor Jennifer Martin to Drive, [ABC News](#).

"The problem is that when you have an addiction, there is no safe amount to have. There are a lot of triggers for people to continue their addiction, so if we can remove the gambling ads for people who have the problems, we can support their health"

The RACP is calling on a total ban on gambling advertising, and you can listen to the interview RACP President Professor Martin had with ABC. The segment on gambling advertising starts at 2:51:51 and ends 2:55:57. Please also read our joint statement with The [The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists](#).

ABC SEGMENT: <https://www.abc.net.au/.../sydney-drive/drive/104221640>

JOINT STATEMENT: <https://www.racp.edu.au/.../psychiatrists-and-physicians...>

POSITION STATEMENT: <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/joint-ranzcp-racp-position-statement-on-prevention-and-treatment-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf>

[#gamblingaddiction](#) [#addiction](#) [#gamblingharm](#)



RACP social media advocacy on gambling.

¹¹⁹ <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>

¹²⁰ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/joint-ranzcp-racp-position-statement-on-prevention-and-treatment-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf?sfvrsn=725cdf1a_4

Submission to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia

The AChAM led a RACP submission to the [Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs \(AOD\) in Australia](#),¹²¹ which stressed the crucial importance of governments moving away from criminality towards an increased focus on health and wellbeing to improve outcomes for individuals and communities.



The submission covered a broad range of issues including:

- rebalancing government funding to prioritise prevention, harm reduction and treatment for drug use
- unmet demand for alcohol and other drug (AOD) services and need to focus on providing access to quality treatment delivered by a suitably trained workforce
- access to treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living in rural and remote communities and people in custodial settings
- various harm reduction measures.

The submission also focused on addressing the harmful role of alcohol on children, young people, families and societies through stronger evidence-based regulation; such as the introduction of minimum floor price for alcohol, more restricted trading hours, introduction of a single national advertising code covering content and placement with statutory penalties for breach and an end to alcohol sponsorship of sporting events. It also identified the intersection of domestic and family violence with alcohol use.

Drug policy position statement *Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*

The RACP drug policy position statement, *Achieving a health-focused approach to drug policy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*,¹²² developed by the joint AChAM/AFPHM Drug Policy Working Group has been approved and published following thorough consultation with internal and external stakeholders this year.

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 and criminalisation. It will be used to strengthen the RACP advocacy to governments and other key stakeholders in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹²¹ [racp-submission-to-the-parliamentary-inquiry-into-the-health-impacts-of-alcohol-and-other-drugs-in-australia.pdf](#)

¹²² [racp-position-statement-achieving-a-health-focused-approach-to-drug-policy-in-australia-and-aotearoa-new-zealand.pdf](#)

Sexual health medicine

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

In May 2024, the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care invited the RACP to provide feedback on the draft National HIV Strategy 2024–2030 as part of a targeted consultation process. The [RACP submission](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-draft-ninth-national-hiv-strategy-2024-2030.pdf?sfvrsn=607bdd1a_6)¹²³ outlined member feedback on the draft strategy, including key elements highlighted by the Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine (AChSHM), that support efforts to reach zero HIV transmission in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The AChSHM Committee has been developing a policy document this year on HIV, including information on the role of sexual health medicine physicians, details on HIV across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, testing, treatment, and issues around late diagnosis, access to PrEP, and living longer with HIV.

The AChSHM, together with the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), has met with several colleges during the year to discuss ways of increasing awareness of testing for HIV and the HIV clinical indicators. Meetings have been held with the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) and the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM).

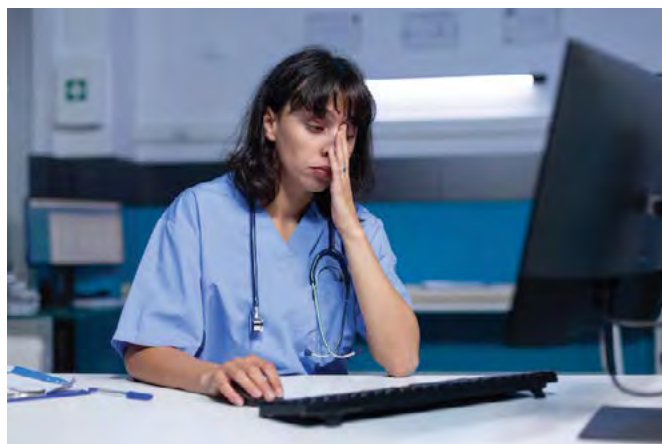
Occupational and environmental medicine

Improving the health of health care workers

Two key policy pieces are in development targeting bi-national change on the pressing need to improve the health of our healthcare workers.

- The Improving the Health of Healthcare Workers Working Group is developing a document to steward improvement in healthcare worker safety, wellbeing and health status in the healthcare sector.
- The Value of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (OEM) Physicians Working Group is developing a document highlighting the role of OEM physicians in the healthcare sector, including how OEM physicians can reduce workplace injury (psychosocial and physical).

RACP members appreciate the hazards of burnout, stress and risk to patient safety. These guidance documents coincide with recently introduced Work Health and Safety legislation that mean workplaces must eliminate or minimise psychosocial risks so far as is reasonable, and this makes AFOEM's work particularly relevant.



RACP members appreciate the hazards of burnout, stress and risk to patient safety.



¹²³ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-draft-ninth-national-hiv-strategy-2024-2030.pdf?sfvrsn=607bdd1a_6

Occupational respiratory diseases, including silicosis

Silicosis and occupational respiratory diseases have involved strong and effective advocacy with solid success supporting worker health. In 2024, the RACP can be proud of the achievements of key contributing members from the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM), the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) and the Australia and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM).

Significant achievements include:

- The RACP called for the establishment of the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry¹²⁴ (NORDR): this was delivered in May 2024; 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.
- The RACP advocated for a ban on engineered stone and earlier this year the Work Health and Safety Ministers unanimously agreed to prohibit the use, supply and manufacture of all engineered stone. Dr Graeme Edwards FAFOEM, RACP silicosis spokesperson, was featured on ABC news and radio (July 2024, September 2024).
- The RACP advocated for improved industry regulations and Safe Work Australia published amendments to the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations¹²⁵, which will strengthen protections for workers at risk of exposure to silica dust across all industries, including building and construction.
- The silicosis¹²⁶ webpages on the RACP website have been updated this year.
- The AFOEM continues to work with Lung Foundation Australia on driving the reforms for prevention and patient care.

¹²⁴ <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/nordr>

¹²⁵ <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-whs-regulations>

¹²⁶ <https://www.racp.edu.au/policy-and-advocacy/division-faculty-and-chapter-priorities/faculty-of-occupational-environmental-medicine/silicosis>



ABC NEWS

As engineered stone ban comes into effect, war on silicosis far from over, doctor warns

By Jessica Lamb

ABC Gold Coast

Health

Sun 30 Jun



Engineered stone became popular in the mid-2000s, with the Gold Coast's property development boom creating a silicosis hotspot. (ABC News)

Aged care

New Aged Care Act

In February 2024, the RACP made a [submission](#)¹²⁷ to the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care draft *Aged care Act Exposure Bill*, which preceded new legislation to improve the care of older persons. The submission drew attention to the need to specifically refer to 'healthcare' for older people (as opposed to just 'care'), as well as the right to timely access to appropriate healthcare and recommended recognition of the importance of functional ability.

Aged care quality standards

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission released a range of [draft guidance resources](#)¹²⁸ for providers and aged care workers, as per new strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards, with this reflecting significant uptake of the 2022 RACP [submission](#)¹²⁹ to the Review of the Aged Care Quality Standards.



¹²⁷ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/submission-to-the-new-aged-care-act-draft-exposure-bill.pdf?sfvrsn=8d03d81a_4

¹²⁸ <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/get-involved/consultation-and-engagement-hub/standards-guidance-consultation>

¹²⁹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission_aged-care-q-s-stds.pdf?sfvrsn=aca7d11a_10

Palliative medicine

Decision-making at end-of-life

A small group of paediatric palliative medicine physicians conducted a literature search as part of a policy scoping process to determine the extent of an update of the 2008 RACP document *Decision-Making at the End of Life for Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. This search revealed sufficient resources already existed and the Australasian Chapter of Palliative Medicine (AChPM) Committee decided not to proceed with an update of the 2008 document. Thank you to the following members for their time and commitment to developing the scoping document: Dr Nicole Armitage FRACP, FACHPM, Dr Emily Chang FRACP, FACHPM, Dr Naomi Katz FRACP, FACHPM and Dr Vanessa Tung FRACP, FACHPM.

Social media promotions

To increase awareness of specialist palliative care services, the RACP social media highlighted key events and dates, such as National Advance Care Planning Week in March 2024. These efforts aim to educate the public and healthcare providers about the importance of advance care planning and available palliative care services.

In May 2024, RACP social posts advocated for establishing multidisciplinary outreach teams. These teams are intended to improve access to multidisciplinary palliative care services within residential aged care facilities (RACFs) across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, enhancing the quality of care provided to older adults nearing the end of their lives.

Also in May 2024, the RACP social media platforms highlighted reports released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) focused on tracking the quality of palliative care through National Palliative Care Measures. These measures assess whether individuals with life-limiting illnesses receive the care they need to live well.



National Advance Care Week.

In August 2024, the RACP supported Dying to Know Day, an initiative by the Groundswell Project to transform how Australia approaches death, care, and grief. By posting several social media posts, the RACP helped advocate for a more compassionate and dignified end-of-life experience for all.



Social media post on Dying to know day.

The occasion of National Carers Week 13–19 October 2024¹³⁰ was also promoted by RACP on social media. National Carers Week was a time to recognise, celebrate, and raise awareness about the vital role of the three million Australians who provide care to a family member or friend.

¹³⁰ <https://carersweek.com.au/>



Social media post on National carers week.

Rehabilitation medicine

In 2024, the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRM) continued its commitment to advancing rehabilitation medicine and advocating for policy changes that benefit both practitioners and patients across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Bi-National rehabilitation

The College Policy and Advocacy Council (CPAC) approved a new project for the development of a Bi-National Rehabilitation Position Statement (BNRPS) in March 2024, and in April 2024, the RACP Board approved the establishment of a cross-College working group to develop this position statement for both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Following an extensive Expression of Interest process a Working Group of 15 members was established.

In June 2024, Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRM) President-elect and AFRM Policy and Advocacy Committee (PAC) Chair, Dr Richard Seemann FAFRM, FRACP, AFRM PAC NSW representative, Dr Alexander Dennis FAFRM, and Policy and Advocacy Team representatives, attended the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM) Conference in Sydney, NSW. The workshop, hosted by the Rehabilitation Medicine Society of Australia and New Zealand (RMSANZ), brought together rehabilitation specialists to discuss critical issues facing the profession. Discussions centered around barriers to high-quality care, equitable patient access, the value and awareness of rehabilitation medicine, and communications and advocacy strategies. An issues paper generated from these discussions will inform future work, including the development of the RACP BNRPS.

Collaboration with Safe Work Australia

The RACP President, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP, along with representatives from AFRM, and AFOEM, met with Safe Work Australia CEO Marie Boland to discuss key areas of collaboration. Topics included expert consultations, strengthening research, enhancing injury prevention strategies, and developing new health monitoring protocols in partnership with international organisations like the Australian Centre for Disease Control. The RACP offered to contribute to decision-making and targeted consultations, particularly in areas such as workers' compensation, injury prevention, and regulatory application.

External consultations and contributions

The AFRM continued its active participation in external consultations, providing expert feedback on several key initiatives. In April 2024, comments were submitted on Comcare's draft Guide for Rehabilitation Assessments. The AFRM also supported the establishment of a National Centre for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing. In September 2024, the AFRM offered important [feedback](https://www.rACP.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/feedback-on-the-draft-version-of-the-aushfg-guideline-610-subacute-care.pdf?sfvrsn=1146de1a_6)¹³¹ to the Australasian Health Infrastructure Alliance on the development of the Australasian Health Facility Guideline 610 Subacute Care, with particular focus on rehabilitation care.



Become a member of the
Bi-National Rehabilitation Position
Statement Working Group
HURRY, CLOSING FRIDAY, 28 JUNE 2024

¹³¹ https://www.rACP.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/feedback-on-the-draft-version-of-the-aushfg-guideline-610-subacute-care.pdf?sfvrsn=1146de1a_6

Disability

In February 2024, the RACP provided a [submission](#)¹³² to the Australian Government Department of Social Services regarding the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report. Pleasingly approximately half (17) of the RACP [35 recommendations](#)¹³³ to the Royal Commission were incorporated. The submission highlighted the need to address a wide range of health-related challenges faced by people with disabilities, emphasising the importance of a holistic and integrated healthcare approach in line with the Royal Commission's recommendations across the education, employment, and housing sectors.

The NDIS Review Final Report *Working Together to Deliver the NDIS* included a significant number of health care recommendations [in line with RACP recommendations](#).¹³⁴

At RACP Congress 2024, we promoted the new [NDIS Guide for Physicians](#)¹³⁵, which was updated in 2023. The guide equips RACP members with essential knowledge to navigate the NDIS and deliver high-quality care for people with disabilities. At Congress, the RACP also highlighted that a dedicated [disability webpage](#)¹³⁶ now exists on the RACP website that provides comprehensive resources related to disability policy and advocacy.

In the lead-up to the 2024 Australian Federal Budget, the RACP advocated for all Australians, particularly those with disabilities, to have access to quality healthcare. Through various social media posts the RACP called on the government to allocate funding for more outreach services and provide additional support to healthcare providers in rural areas to ensure effective care for people with disabilities.

The RACP expressed disappointment regarding the Australian Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission in an August 2024 [media release](#),¹³⁷ emphasising that healthcare for people with disabilities was inadequately addressed, underscoring physicians' crucial role in improving health literacy and patient outcomes.

In September 2024, the RACP welcomed the opportunity to participate in reviewing the *Australian Disability Strategy (ADS) 2021–2031*. The RACP [submission](#)¹³⁸ 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, as included in the submission to the Department of Social Services.

Additionally, the RACP is developing a submission in response to the Department of Social Services consultation paper on NDIS General Supports. This paper is part of ongoing efforts to gather input from people with disabilities, their families, carers, and other stakeholders, to inform the design and implementation of supports beyond those provided by the NDIS or mainstream services. The RACP submission will reflect its commitment to advocating for comprehensive and inclusive support systems that empower people with disabilities to fully participate in the community and make informed decisions about their lives.



132 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-department-of-social-services-regarding-the-disability-royal-commission-final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=3f1ad81a_4

133 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-recommendation-uptake-in-the-royal-commission-into-violence-neglect-and-exploitation-of-people-with-disability-report.pdf?sfvrsn=5f48db1a_12

134 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-recommendation-alignment-with-the-ndis-review-final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=7596da1a_15

135 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/ndis-guide-for-physicians-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=5f66d71a_4

136 <https://www.racp.edu.au/policy-and-advocacy/policy-and-advocacy-priorities/disability>

137 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/healthcare-hardly-mentioned-in-government-s-disability-report---physicians>

138 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-department-of-social-services-review-of-the-australian-disability-strategy-2021-2031.pdf?sfvrsn=b513de1a_4



Aotearoa New Zealand

Workforce

In 2024 Policy and Advocacy in Aotearoa New Zealand has built upon the workforce advocacy that began in our 2023 election campaign [#Healhealthcare](#), both in government relations work and within the College.



RACP Aotearoa New Zealand election campaign [#HealHealthcare](#)

In May 2024, the Chair of the Aotearoa New Zealand Policy and Advocacy Committee Dr Hamish McCay FRACP, Chair of the Māori Health Committee Dr Matt Wheeler FRACP and the Policy and Advocacy Team met with the Hon Dr Shane Reti MP, Minister of Health. The Minister had read our briefing on workforce and indicated that the health workforce was the most important issue for him. He sees short-term solutions as retention, good working conditions and immigration regulations for Overseas Trained Physicians (OTPs). The long-term solution is keeping a culturally safe homegrown workforce. He expressed a desire to work with the RACP on solutions to improve workforce repatriation and workforce wellbeing.

The Policy and Advocacy Team also met with the Ministry of Health General Manager of workforce policy to explore opportunities for increased engagement between the RACP and the Ministry on workforce issues.

Within the College, the Policy and Advocacy Team facilitated a number of presentations on medical workforce data by Te Whatu Ora including the Adult Medicine Division Committee and Aotearoa New Zealand and Māori Health Committee joint hui.



L–R back row: Dr Nick Baker, Dr Hamish McCay Aotearoa New Zealand President, Dr Matt Wheeler Chair of Māori Health Committee. Middle row left to right – Hon Dr Shane Reti Minister of Health, Dr Kate Scott. L–R front row: Di Cookson and Jacqui Wallens Policy and Advocacy.

The team continues to work collaboratively on cross-College solutions to further workforce advocacy.

In May 2024, the RACP responded to the Medical Council of New Zealand's consultation on their draft statement 'Treating yourself and those close to you', intended to help doctors understand why in most situations, they should not treat themselves or those with whom they have a close relationship. Members agreed in the RACP [submission](#)¹³⁹ 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. The Māori Health Committee urged reconsideration of the definition of 'exceptional circumstances where there may be no alternative to treating yourself or those close to you'.

¹³⁹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-medical-council-of-new-zealand-statement-on-treating-yourself-and-those-close-to-you.pdf?sfvrsn=2187dd1a_7

Harm prevention

The RACP supported proposals in the *Land Transport (Drug Driving) Bill* in a [submission](#)¹⁴⁰ to the Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee, 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 of focus on funding for much needed prevention, impairment information and research.

The RACP also [submitted](#)¹⁴¹ to the Health Select Committee in Aotearoa New Zealand 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 18 year olds and proposed visibility/proximity restrictions on retail outlets. The RACP noted enforcement capability will be crucial to ensure implementation of these restrictions.

Child and youth health

The RACP completed a [submission](#)¹⁴² to provide feedback on 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.

The RACP [submitted](#)¹⁴³ to Pharmac to support its proposal to remove the renewal criteria for stimulants methylphenidate, dexamfetamine and modafinil from 1 December 2024 to reduce barriers to access and workforce pressures.

Climate and health

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the RACP [submitted](#)¹⁴⁴ to the Primary Production Committee on the *Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme Agricultural Obligations) Amendment Bill*.

Aotearoa New Zealand's greatest emissions are contributed by primary industries – predominantly agriculture. 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 submission opposed this, considering the proposals in the Bill are 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, using all available legislative tools including the Emissions Trading Scheme.

140 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-transport-and-infrastructure-select-committee-on-land-transport-drug-driving-amendment-bill.pdf?sfvrsn=1b99de1a_4

141 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/the-racp-submission-to-the-health-committee-on-the-smokefree-environments-and-regulated-products-amendment-bill-no-2.pdf?sfvrsn=4d45de1a_6

142 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-university-of-auckland-rheumatic-fever-and-rheumatic-heart-disease-guidelines.pdf?sfvrsn=7deedf1a_16

143 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-pharmac-proposal-to-remove-the-renewal-criteria-for-stimulant-treatment.pdf?sfvrsn=3cfa11a_6

144 [racp-submission-to-the-primary-production-committee-climate-change-response-emissions-trading-scheme-agricultural-obligations-amendment-bill.pdf](#)

Syphilis

The RACP endorsed a letter in March 2024 from the New Zealand Sexual Health Society asking for government action to address the syphilis epidemic. The letter outlined a set of goals: 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 was followed with a call to address the epidemic when Aotearoa New Zealand Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair, Dr Hamish McCay FRACP, and Māori Health Committee Chair, Dr Matt Wheeler FRACP, and Policy and Advocacy, met with the Hon Dr Shane Reti MP, Minister of Health, in May 2024.

Silicosis

In March 2024, an RACP [media release](#)¹⁴⁵ called for the Aotearoa New Zealand Government to:

- introduce a ban on the use of engineered stone or implement rigorous controls of engineered stone importers and fabricators.
- establish an official registry of people with workplace silica dust exposure to allow long-term follow-up and support.

The RACP achieved positive media coverage during 2024 on this matter both online; [The New Zealand Herald](#),¹⁴⁶ [Otago Daily Times](#),¹⁴⁷ [LiveNews](#)¹⁴⁸ and RNZ Online, as well as radio; [Live Radio NZ \(checkpoint\) interview with Dr Alexandra Muthu FAFOEM](#),¹⁴⁹ Radio NZ bulletins and [Live Newstalk ZB interview \(Drive with Heather with Dr Alexandra Muthu FAFOEM\)](#).¹⁵⁰ The RACP Aotearoa New Zealand spokesperson, Dr Alexandra Muthu FAFOEM, has been at the forefront of this campaign in Aotearoa.



¹⁴⁵ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-call-on-new-zealand-government-to-follow-australia-s-lead-to-ban-engineered-stone-and-support-workers-already-exposed-to-silica-dust>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/doctors-urge-ban-on-benchtop-material-engineered-stone-warn-tradies-of-risk-from-silicosis-lung-disease/XR24DQQVQFE3ZOPPB36RI7R7RQ/>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.odt.co.nz/business/engineered-stone-benchtops-made-bogeyman>

¹⁴⁸ <https://livenews.co.nz/2024/03/18/health-and-politics-physicians-call-on-new-zealand-government-to-follow-australias-lead-to-ban-engineered-stone-and-support-workers-already-exposed-to-silica-dust/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://app.box.com/s/yk1ych48mx6zc4ifc9exv8yfem06lkzh>

¹⁵⁰ <https://app.box.com/s/f83ex8dndbb8fu8lqgbuipy8fynd1dxk>



State and territory advocacy

New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory (NSW/ACT)

The NSW/ACT Committee led the development of a College [submission](#)¹⁵¹ to the [NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding](#).¹⁵² The submission highlighted the need to safeguard and invest in a safe and well-resourced medical specialist workforce as a precursor to a functioning, effective and sustainable health system. It called on the NSW Government to prioritise investment in the regional, rural and remote medical workforce, preventive healthcare, First Nations health and wellbeing, early childhood, aged care and disability. It also focused on the need for a health-based approach to drug policy, greater investment in integrated care, and for a commitment to achieving net zero healthcare emissions by 2040.

The RACP also provided a wide range of information to the Commission on accreditation, education, training and workforce advocacy, and met with the Commission Inquiry Team. In addition, College representatives gave evidence at the inquiry. The RACP continues to engage in the inquiry.

The former RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP and NSW/ACT Committee representatives met with the NSW Minister for Health and NSW Minister for Regional Health the Hon Ryan Park MP, early in the year. The focus of the meeting was on workforce and wellbeing needs of physicians and trainees in NSW, improving accreditation of training sites, prioritising workforce shortages in rural, regional and remote areas of the state and maintaining quality and safety standards in assessment of overseas trained physicians.

Follow-up meetings were held with the NSW Deputy Secretary for Regional Health focusing on regional, rural and remote issues, and the District Director, Medical Workforce, Ministry of Health focusing on workforce and education training.

The RACP President and the AChAM President wrote to the Hon Ryan Park MP, NSW Minister for Health, and the co-chairs of the NSW Drug Summit about RACP participation in the upcoming NSW Drug Summit, and suggested member representation. The NSW Drug Summit was held over two days in regional NSW in October and will be held in Sydney in early December.

Northern Territory (NT)

The Northern Territory (NT) Committee released its [Election Statement](#)¹⁵³ ahead of the NT election in August 2024 along with a [media statement](#).¹⁵⁴ The RACP called on all parties to commit to key reforms that help address health workforce shortages, improve health outcomes for children and young people, and take meaningful steps toward combating climate change, ahead of the Northern Territory elections. Favourable responses from both major parties were received.

Dr Kirsty Neal FRACP, Acting Chair of the NT Committee also published an opinion piece in Croakey Health Media, [‘A three-point health prescription for the next Northern Territory government’](#).¹⁵⁵

151 <https://healthcarefunding.specialcommission.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/publications/Listing-of-Submissions-48/Submission-107-Royal-Australasian-College-of-Physicians.pdf>

152 <https://healthcarefunding.specialcommission.nsw.gov.au/>

153 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-2024-nt-election-statement.pdf>

154 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/nt-physicians-say-next-northern-territory-government-must-address-health-workforce-shortages-improve-indigenous-children-s-health-and-combat-climate-change>

155 <https://www.croakey.org/a-three-point-health-prescription-for-the-next-northern-territory-government/>



Professor Jennifer Martin and Dr Kirtsy Neal

Members of the NT Committee also met with the Hon Selena Uiibo MLA, the then NT Minister for Health. The focus of the meeting was on physician workforce and wellbeing including workforce shortages across NT, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas, and the need to grow a positive workplace culture and working conditions to support quality specialty training.

The NT Committee wrote to the Hon Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, congratulating her on her appointment as Chief Minister, and raising concerns about her new government's intention to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 12 years to 10 years. Other priorities brought to the Chief Minister's attention included the need for action on climate change, universal access to quality early childhood education and growing and supporting the physician and trainee physician workforce in the NT.

The NT Committee published a [media](#)¹⁵⁶ statement expressing concern over the Government's proposal to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 10 years of age, calling on the Government to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children in the territory.



RACP expressed concerns over the lowering of age for criminal responsibility.

The NT Committee also wrote to the new Minister for Health, the Hon Steven Edgington MLA, seeking to meet with him on RACP and NT Committee priorities and to forge a productive working relationship with him.

The NT Committee prepared a [submission](#)¹⁵⁷ to the Commonwealth [Senate Inquiry](#)¹⁵⁸ into the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct, emphasising the health harms of fossil fuels. The submission urges the Australian Government to ensure that health impacts are a central consideration in relation to decisions on fossil fuel projects.

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/10-year-old-children-shouldn-t-be-put-in-jail-paediatricians-write-to-new-nt-government>

¹⁵⁷ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-middle-arm-industrial-precinct-senate-inquiry.pdf?sfvrsn=487cd61a_7

¹⁵⁸ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/MiddleArm

Queensland (Qld)

Representatives from the RACP's Queensland Committee met with the then Queensland Minister for Health, the Hon Shannon Fentiman MP, early in the year to discuss physician and trainee physician workforce matters. These included the need to improve workplace culture and conditions to support member training, promote a culture of wellbeing for physicians and trainees, and address workforce shortages across Queensland particularly in regional, rural and remote parts of the state.

The Committee subsequently met with Ms Rosslyn Bates, Shadow Minister for Health and Ambulance Services to similarly discuss matters concerning physician workforce and wellbeing.

The Committee has also had ongoing engagement with the Hon Di Farmer MP, former 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. In addition, the Committee released a [media](#)¹⁵⁹ statement expressing its concern.

The Committee led a RACP [submission](#)¹⁶⁰ to the Queensland Parliament's former Youth Justice Reform Inquiry. The submission focused on the need to involve paediatricians in youth justice reform, prioritising First Nations leadership, raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years, the importance of housing children and young people in purpose-designed facilities with suitable supports, and the need for health checks for children and young people on entering the youth justice system. A [media statement](#)¹⁶¹ in support of the RACP submission was also released.

South Australia (SA)

Associate Professor Andrew Lee FRACP, Chair of the South Australian Committee met with the South Australian Chief Health Officer Professor Nicola Spurrier FAFPHM, FRACP and Deputy Public Health Officer Dr Louise Flood FAFPHM about concerns relating to proposed organisational changes to the Public Health Division of S Health. Associate 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 that focuses 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.

A [media statement](#)¹⁶² in June welcomed 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.

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/child-and-adolescent-physicians-express-grave-concerns-about-queensland-children-being-detained-in-adult-watchhouses>

¹⁶⁰ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-queensland-youth-justice-reform-select-committee-inquiry-into-youth-justice-reform.pdf?sfvrsn=f877d81a_4

¹⁶¹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/key-to-addressing-youth-justice-is-to-treat-children-as-kids-not-criminals---physicians>

¹⁶² <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/the-racp-says-south-australia-s-preschool-investment-is-a-big-win-for-child-health-and-development>

The RACP accepted the Assistant Minister for Autism, the Hon Emily Bourke's MLC, invitation to join the [Autism Advisory Committee](#)¹⁶³ following the release of the [SA Autism Strategy](#).¹⁶⁴ The Committee was established to provide strategic advice, and a strong voice for people with autism and their communities to help shape the development and guide the implementation of the strategy and charter. The Committee consists of up to 13 members (including people with autism and their parents/carers), is chaired by the Assistant Minister for Autism, the Hon Emily Bourke MLC and is attended by representatives of the Department of Human Services and the Office for Autism.

The RACP paid tribute to the late Dr Michael Yung FRACP in a [public statement](#)¹⁶⁵ in December 2023 and acknowledged his work at the Adelaide Women and Children's paediatric Intensive Care Unit.

Tasmania (Tas)

The Tasmanian Committee released their [Election Statement](#)¹⁶⁶ ahead of the Tasmanian Election in March 2024 along with a [media statement](#).¹⁶⁷ The RACP called on all parties to commit to supporting the specialist workforce, fostering a culture of wellbeing for physicians and trainees, improving access to healthcare for priority populations, universal quality early childhood education and evidence-based school supports. The election statement received responses from all three major political parties (the Liberal Party, the Australian Labor Party and the Greens), affirming our advocacy asks.

Representatives from the Tasmanian Committee met with the Hon Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing in August 2024. The meeting focused on supporting the specialist workforce to meet growing healthcare needs, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas. Discussions also included improving access to specialist healthcare for priority populations, enhancing health system efficiency, and fostering a culture of well-being for physicians and trainees. The Minister committed to annual meetings with the RACP, and in addition, in person attendance at Tasmanian Committee meetings once a year. The Minister also committed to addressing workforce concerns including unfilled Basic Physician Training positions in Launceston and delays in issuing contracts to successful applicants. He also agreed to consider meaningful well-being initiatives for physicians and to evaluate the current well-being program for Junior Medical Officers.

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.officeforautism.sa.gov.au/autism/sa-is-leading-the-way#:~:text=The%20Committee%20consists%20of%20up,and%20the%20Office%20for%20Autism>.

¹⁶⁴ <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/news/2024/the-first-autism-strategy-launches-in-south-australia>

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/racp-pays-tribute-to-dr-michael-yung>

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/prioritising-health-tasmanian-election-statement-2024.pdf>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-say-workforce-shortages-must-be-addressed-to-support-tasmania-s-most-vulnerable-patients>

The Tasmanian Committee developed a [submission](#)¹⁶⁸ to the Tasmanian Select Committee on the Transfer of Care Delays (Ambulance Ramping) inquiry. The submission focused on broader access to care and hospital discharge issues that contribute to hospital admission issues. The RACP proposed a number of solutions to these concerns including:

- additional funding for public hospitals
- establishing urgent care clinics and more ambulatory multidisciplinary care clinics
- implementing innovative integrated models of care involving specialists
- investing in the expansion of the Tasmanian specialist workforce.

The RACP released a [media statement](#)¹⁶⁹ supporting the Tasmanian Government's proposal to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to 14 years without exceptions by 2029, which is in accordance with the advice of health and medical experts.

Victoria (Vic)

The RACP issued a [media statement](#)¹⁷⁰ 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 also stressed that the minimum age of criminal responsibility should be increased to at least 14 years and was featured on the National Indigenous Radio Service and Koori Radio.

RACP representatives attended a Victorian Department of Health briefing relating to the sustainability of the Victorian Health System. The Department of Health outlined their roadmap for a more connected health system and the creation of local health networks. The Department of Health accepted most recommendations outlined in the Victorian Expert Advisory Committee's [Health Services Plan](#),¹⁷¹ in full or in principle.

Professor Adrian Dunlop FACHAM, AChAM President, and Associate Professor Solomon Menahem FRACP, 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.

The College responded to the [Yoorrook Justice Commission's](#)¹⁷² request for information about First Nations paediatricians, paediatric trainees and other College initiatives to support First Nations practitioners to join, remain and advance within the profession. The Yoorrook Justice Commission is the first formal truth-telling process investigating past and ongoing injustices experienced by the First Nations people in Victoria. Yoorrook will deliver its final report in 2025.

¹⁶⁸ https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/77263/62.-RACP.pdf

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-commend-tasmanian-government-for-announcing-it-will-raise-the-minimum-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/paediatricians-encourage-victorian-opposition-and-crossbench-to-support-raising-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/research-and-reports/health-services-plan>

¹⁷² <https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/>

Western Australia (WA)

The Parliamentary Select Committee into Child Development Services published its [final report](#)¹⁷³ in April 2024, with extensive coverage of RACP engagement. The RACP previously provided a [submission](#)¹⁷⁴ to the inquiry and PCHD President, Professor Nitin Kapur FRACP, appeared at an inquiry hearing.

Following this, the Western Australian Committee welcomed the WA Government's announcement earlier this year of \$39 million for the significant expansion of the Child Development Service, including specific commitments regarding the paediatric workforce.

The Committee wrote to the Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA, Minister for Health and Mental Health, requesting a meeting to discuss local RACP priorities. Although the Minister declined the request for a meeting, the Western Australian Committee has had subsequent and ongoing

engagement with staff in the Minister's office principally about the Committee's child health and physician workforce priorities. In addition, a meeting has been organised with the Chief Medical Officer for later in the year.

The AChAM President, Professor Adrian Dunlop FACHAM, and the AChAM Committee WA Branch Convenor, Dr Craig Connelly FACHAM, met with the WA Committee Chair to discuss the issue of [mandatory reporting requirements of drug dependent patients](#)¹⁷⁵ under WA legislation and the operation of these requirements. Follow up meetings with the Chief Health Officer and Chief Pharmacist are planned.

Members of the Western Australian Committee also engaged with the WA Government on the WA Health Sector Climate Adaptation Plan.

The Committee is currently drafting its WA Election Statement in advance of the WA election to be held on 8 March 2025.



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.

¹⁷³ [https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/\(Report+Lookup+by+Com+ID\)/97243864767EFE6E48258B02002A6A67/\\$file/cd.cds.240418.rpf.003.Web.Version.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/(Report+Lookup+by+Com+ID)/97243864767EFE6E48258B02002A6A67/$file/cd.cds.240418.rpf.003.Web.Version.pdf)

¹⁷⁴ [https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/lulnquiryPublicSubmissions/5640666FEC0E28AE4825890900117F23/\\$file/00083NoCover.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/lulnquiryPublicSubmissions/5640666FEC0E28AE4825890900117F23/$file/00083NoCover.pdf)

¹⁷⁵ https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.health.wa.gov.au%2FArticles%2FN_R%2FReporting-drug-dependence&data=05%7C02%7CRema.Hayek%40racp.edu.au%7Cf915d43407a1402ff86308dcb5bebf35%7C09c2d83fca574dad8a0b502b18e773e8%7C0%7C0%7C638585078083728947%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwILCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=hn%2F6mSoxPrk%2FhC71fnWaC0o2qQgScbqZRfWrwBarqIA%3D&reserved=0



Policy and Advocacy Team L-R back row: Hope Finneran, Rema Hayek, Dorota Sacha-Krol, Debra Moss, Madelyn Smith, Timothy Bowen, Christian White, Melissa Nicol and Bronwen Evans. L-R front row: Kathryn Powell, Anja Cuskelly, Georgina Outlaw, Teodora Kukic, Priscilla Rodriguez, Di Cookson, Jacqui Wallens, Justine Watkins and Nicola Lewis.





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