



RACP
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EDUCATE ADVOCATE INNOVATE

POLICY AND ADVOCACY ANNUAL REPORT 2023

College Policy & Advocacy Council



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Introduction from the College Policy & Advocacy Council Chair

I am continually amazed at the level of commitment and passion our members give to the important work of policy and advocacy.

This will be my final report as Chair of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians' (RACP) College Policy & Advocacy Council (CPAC). You bring your specialty expertise and experiences to inform and build strong positions and clear actions. Without your collaboration and voices, we could not deliver our health policy priorities.

I know that you want to see successful advocacy outcomes and The RACP's voice being represented at the highest levels of the Australian Government and through Parliament. 2023 has been a very active time for The RACP achieving those goals, and we have provided a summary of highlights of representation and successful advocacy at the start of this report for you.

We continue delivering against the CPAC Plan 2022–2026¹ which looks to focus our policy and advocacy work around four priority areas, advocating for improvements to our health system and broader health and social policy, to achieve our goal of improved and equitable health outcomes for all in our community. In the following pages are highlights over the last 12 months (Oct 2022 – Oct 2023) from CPAC member RACP Bodies and CPAC's work plan.

It is through the CPAC that we connect across The RACP, engaging with and supporting specialty and region led activities. Member engagement is critical to The RACP being able to build on our past achievements, which are founded on the expertise of and respect for our Fellows and trainees within our health community. I hope together we continue to strengthen the College's reputation as one of the leaders for health policy advice to Government and other health stakeholders.

Some of the key achievements aligned to the CPAC plan focus areas, showcased in this report include:



First Nations Health and Equity

This year was an historical milestone for The RACP, with members voting overwhelmingly to include an Indigenous Object in The RACP Constitution. The Indigenous Object is a strong foundation for The RACP to continue allocating and supporting better health outcomes for all Māori peoples and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have been demonstrating The RACP's ongoing commitment supporting First Nations aspirations and outcomes in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand by respecting and promoting the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. See the First Nations Health and Equity section for more information, page 10.



Healthcare reform

On 31 May, The RACP hosted a [virtual Town Hall event](#)² with The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, and The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, on integrated multidisciplinary care.

I closed the event, highlighting that healthcare reform and in particular integrated care and putting consumers at the centre of the health system, are ongoing policy and advocacy priorities of The RACP.

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

² <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/all-events/past-event-presentations#:~:text=2023%20Healthcare%20Reform%20Virtual%20Town%20Hall%20%E2%80%93%20putting%20the%20patient%20at%20the%20centre>

The portfolio of work on healthcare reform this year has been extensive in 2023 with successful advocacy through two budget processes, the Mid-Term Review of the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) Addendum 2020–25, the setting of the Nationally Efficient Price (NEP), the Nationally Efficient Cost (NEC) for Australian Public Hospital Services, and the review of the National Medicines Policy (NMP). In addition, I contributed to the Medicare Integrity review on behalf of The RACP and the consultation on the formation of the new Australian Centre of Disease Control with Dr Leena Gupta the support of many members from the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHM), the Australasian Faculty of Occupational Environmental Medicine (AFOEM), the COVID-ERG, the Policy and Advocacy Action Group (PAAG), Australian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) and other specialty societies. See the Healthcare Reform section for more information, page 16.



Climate and Justice

The RACP has successfully advocated for a National Climate and Health Strategy (now under development) and a National Climate Change and Sustainability Unit, with The Hon Mark Butler publicly acknowledging The RACP’s successful role in this.

We have not done this alone, however having brought together a coalition of 13 medical colleges representing over 100,000 health workers, over the last few years with the Healthy Climate Future campaign. This year, RACP led a [joint statement](#)³ by this coalition calling for the National Health and Climate Strategy to be fully funded, have National Cabinet sign-off, be guided by First Nations knowledge and leadership, and build healthy and climate resilient communities. The joint statement received significant media and social media coverage; see the Climate and Justice section for more information, page 26.



Populations in Focus – DFaCs and States and Territories

On 21 June, The RACP co-hosted a major event, the [2023 RACP Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable](#)⁴, with the Parliamentary Friends of Child and Adolescent Health and Mental Health, at Parliament House, Canberra.

The event raised awareness across the Federal Parliament of the health and wellbeing of children in care and protection services and youth justice settings. It also provided a valuable space for stakeholders to discuss ways to improve the health and care for these children, including showcasing best practice models of care. During the event, The RACP’s [Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services position statement](#)⁵ was launched. See the Populations in Focus section for more information, page 34.

We have also supported the Divisions, Faculties, Chapters, States and Territories with successful advocacy this year. This includes the successful funding and enshrining in legislation of the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry with the Australasian Faculty of Environmental Medicine (AFOEM), the successful advocacy to make methadone and buprenorphine more accessible with the Australasian Chapter of Adult Medicine (AChAM), and both the ACT and Vic government’s commitment to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years via a staged process with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee (ATSHIC) and The RACP state and territory offices. See the Populations in Focus section for more information, page 34 and the states and territories section for more information, page 55.

3 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/australia-s-healthcare-system-must-get-ready-for-the-next-climate-disaster>

4 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-convene-roundtable-calling-for-urgent-resourcing-of-health-care-for-children-in-care-and-protection-services>

5 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



Aotearoa New Zealand

The RACP plays an active role in election campaigns by advocating for policies that enable their patients to live longer, healthier lives. In the lead up to the 2023 Aotearoa New Zealand General Election, The RACP called on the Aotearoa New Zealand Government to [#HealHealthcare](#)⁶, and commit to ensuring our health workforce is planned, trained, and retained. See the Aotearoa New Zealand section for more information, page 53.



Professor Jennifer Martin

Chair of the College Policy & Advocacy Council
President-Elect of The RACP

CPAC Chair, RACP President-Elect,
Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP



Being part of the Royal Australasian College Policy and Advocacy Council was an enlightening experience. It was a privilege to be part of a team that passionately championed important causes such as climate action, Indigenous health, population health and equitable care. Other important public health issues included alcohol and substance abuse as well as metabolic health. The strength of RACP lies in its diversity in expertise. We were able to advocate on multiple issues, and am grateful to all RACP regions, divisions, faculties and chapters as well as specialty societies and other stakeholders for our collaborations. Our tireless advocacy is a testament to the power of collective action in creating a healthier, more equitable future.

Dr Chris Leung FRACP, past CPAC Executive Committee member

⁶ <https://www.racp.edu.au/advocacy/the-2023-aotearoa-new-zealand-election>

⁷ <https://www.racp.edu.au/about/committees/board/college-policy-and-advocacy-committee>

CPAC and CPAC EC overview

The College Policy & Advocacy Council⁷ (CPAC) comprises up to 32 Fellows, trainees and consumer members representing the Colleges' specialties, Indigenous groups, States and Territories, consumer perspectives and expert individuals. It meets twice a year to discuss, debate and decide The RACP's focus and priorities for health policy and advocacy.

CPAC's Executive Committee (CPAC EC) is an up to 12-member email-based, rapid response group, highly experienced in health policy with a focus on delivering the highest standard of policy and advocacy for The RACP and its members.

What The RACP has done this year

The College Policy and Advocacy Council (CPAC) Plan 2022–2026⁸ positions The RACP as a leading, evidence-based organisation on health policy.

The CPAC Plan consists of four focus areas that reflect the broad scope of The RACP and six approaches supporting strong and effective policy and advocacy. The activity reflects a strategic decision made by CPAC last year, which is aimed to balance focus to more proactive work aligned with the CPAC Plan 2022–2026. It sits alongside submissions and responses and meets the CPAC Board KPI of 160 CPAC EC matters over this period.

During the reporting period between October 2022 and October 2023, the CPAC EC considered the following number of matters. The total number was considerably higher than previous years, including at the peak of COVID advocacy during the pandemic. There were 18 more submissions in the 2023 period than 2022, representing a 40 per cent increase. These increases could partly reflect the new Government, which has engaged in many reviews and inquiries, and the increased focus on advocacy as a strategy over the last two years resulting in an increased number of government and other stakeholders reaching out for RACP expert advice.

Reporting period (12 months Oct–Oct)	Total no. of matters considered	No. of submissions	No. of endorsements
2022–2023	260	60	11
Over the previous four years, CPAC EC have considered the following:			
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.



Aotearoa New Zealand matters

(given the smaller Aotearoa New Zealand membership there were increased opportunities for individual member responses rather than formal RACP responses as indicated below)

Number of RACP submissions: 4

Number of individual member responses: 7

Number of endorsements: 1

⁸ 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: 6

- [PCHD: Revision of the Circumcision of Infant Males position statement](#)⁹
- [PCHD: Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services position statement](#)¹⁰
- [AFRM: Bariatric Rehabilitation position statement](#)¹¹
- [RACP NDIS Guides](#)¹²
- [AoNZ: #HealHealthcare Election Statement](#)¹³
- [AoNZ: General Election Statement](#)¹⁴



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

⁹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-circumcision-of-infant-males-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=92edd11a_4

¹⁰ 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

¹¹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/afmr-bariatric-rehabilitation-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=408bd21a_8

¹² https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/ndis-guide-for-physicians-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=5f66d71a_4

¹³ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/election-statement/2023-heal-healthcare-workforce-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=817fd71a_6

¹⁴ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/election-statement/general-position-election-statement-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=a07fd71a_8



no. of media releases and interviews: 74



Government relations (Aus)

RACP government relations reflect a focus on 'increasing influence on public policy' as a strategy outlined in the CPAC Plan 2022–2026.

MP/key stakeholder meetings Jan to Oct 2023:

Total number of MP and Stakeholder meetings:	46
Government engagement / meetings (Federal/State/Government Body):	34
Number of Stakeholder engagements / meetings (Medical Body/Other):	12
Number of MP / Parliamentary Events:	2



Australian Parliament House – Canberra

Key events and wins 2023

Member Representation – A selection

RACP's President, Dr Jacqueline Small, met with The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care.

RACP's President-Elect, Professor Jennifer Martin represented The RACP on the Medicare Integrity Review.

Dr Jacqueline Small represented RACP at the Federal Government National Early Years Summit.

Dr Jacqueline Small represented The RACP on the Chief Medical Officers Group for the development of the National Health and Climate Change Strategy.

Professor Nitin Kapur, President of The RACP Paediatrics and Child Health Division (PCHD), represented The RACP on the International Paediatric Association ([IPA Standing Committee](#)).

Professor Lynne Madden, represented The RACP at the Commonwealth Government's Climate Change and Health Roundtable.

Dr Jacqueline Small, provided evidence to the ACT Government's Inquiry into the Justice (Criminal Age of Responsibility) Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

Associate Professor Linda Selvey represented The RACP at the National Resilience Taskforce health sector roundtable on national crisis response and recovery, run by the Department of Home Affairs.

Professor Nitin Kapur provided evidence at the WA Inquiry into Child Development Services.

Associate Professor Daryl Efron provided evidence on behalf of The RACP to the Senate Enquiry into assessment and support services for people with ADHD.

Professor Louise Baur represented The RACP at the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport inquiry on diabetes.

Professor John Saunders, President-Elect of The RACP's Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM), represented the College at a public hearing of the [House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm](#).

.....
A RACP Virtual Town Hall on Healthcare Reform was held with The Hon Mark Butler MP (see page 18 for more information)
.....

.....
A Child Health Roundtable was hosted by The RACP at Parliament House in Canberra (see page 42 for more information)
.....

Successful RACP advocacy outcomes – A snapshot

The Australian Government Department of Education committed to reviewing the impact of COVID-19 on school students with disability, a recommendation from the Kids Catch Up campaign.

RACP recommendations were accepted by the Parliamentary Inquiry into Long COVID.

* In addition to this selection of opportunities for representation College members attended 46 meetings (January to October 2023) with Members of Parliament and Stakeholders.

Both the ACT and Vic Governments committed to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years via a staged process, and the NT Government raised the age from 10 to 12, successful recommendations of RTA advocacy.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide admits The RACP submission into evidence, promoting The RACP recommendations.

RACP recommendations accepted by the Commonwealth Government and funded in the budget across First Nations health, Medicare, Urgent Care Clinics, the Australian CDC, tobacco and alcohol, aged care and silicosis.

Advocacy from The RACP contributed to the Commonwealth Government making methadone and buprenorphine, essential medications to treat opioid dependence, more accessible to people requiring opioid dependence treatment.

The SA Government commits to universal early learning for three-year-olds, a key ask of the Kids Catch Up Campaign.

The National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry was funded and legislated by Government based on recommendations of The RACP.

Joint RACP advocacy with Derbal Yerrigan AMS about young people in Banksia Hill Detention Centre WA resulted in successful recommendations including individualised care plans for all young people at Banksia Hill Detention Centre, 'in reach' health services to young people, creating a mentoring program for young people and staff.

RACP launched the Switch off the Junk campaign, as part of the Kids Catch Up campaign, to call on the Australian Government to act on childhood obesity through controlling junk food advertising to children with over 1,000 people joining the campaign.

RACP recommendations accepted in the National Health and Climate Change Strategy development, and The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care publicly acknowledged The RACP's successful advocacy in securing the strategy.

The RACP was invited to attend the National Resilience Taskforce health sector roundtable run by the Department of Home Affairs. This was a key opportunity to advocate for investment in climate resilience, prevention, and the health workforce to ensure that healthcare systems have the capacity and capability to effectively respond to and recover from crises.

RACP recommendations were outlined in the Department of Health and Aged Care's CDC stakeholder consultation summary [report](#)¹⁵ for the design of the new CDC.

The RACP made a [submission](#)¹⁶ to the TGA's consultation on the proposed regulation of nicotine vaping products (NVPs) in Australia, recommendations formed part of the comprehensive range of vaping reforms announced by Minister Butler in May.

Government and Opposition public engagement with The RACP AoNZ election platform, including support for expanding telehealth, improving access to healthcare and workforce retention, and broad agreement from the incoming Government with The RACP's asks.

AoNZ Government accepting The RACP calls to maintain 1-month maximum prescription for opioids outside palliative care contexts.

* In addition to this selection of successful advocacy outcomes the College submitted 71 submissions and endorsements, developed and launched 6 new policies, and delivered successful media outlined over the following sections.

15 <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/centre-for-disease-control-stakeholder-consultation-report>

16 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission_tga-proposed-reforms-to-nvp-regulation.pdf?sfvrsn=53c8d01a_8



First Nations Health and Equity



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee members following the vote to include an Indigenous Object in the RACP Constitution

RACP members vote to include an Indigenous Object in the College Constitution

The 5 May 2023 marked an historical milestone for The RACP and its members, who voted overwhelmingly to include an Indigenous Object in The Constitution. The "Indigenous Object"¹⁷ demonstrates The RACP's ongoing commitment to supporting First Nations aspirations and outcomes in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand by respecting and promoting the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Indigenous Object also provides a strong foundation for the RACP to continue to The RACP and support better health outcomes for all Māori peoples and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

17 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/constitution-of-the-racp.pdf?sfvrsn=3d4e321a_6

RACP supports constitutional recognition and a First Nations Voice to Parliament

On 14 October 2023, the public voted in the referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution through establishing a First Nations Voice to Parliament (The Voice).

In the lead up to the referendum, The RACP published a [public statement](#)¹⁸ reiterating its long-standing commitment to addressing Indigenous health inequities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and its position in support of The Voice. It also recognises the importance of listening to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about the issues and decisions that affect their lives, which is critical to ‘closing the gap’ in health outcomes between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians.

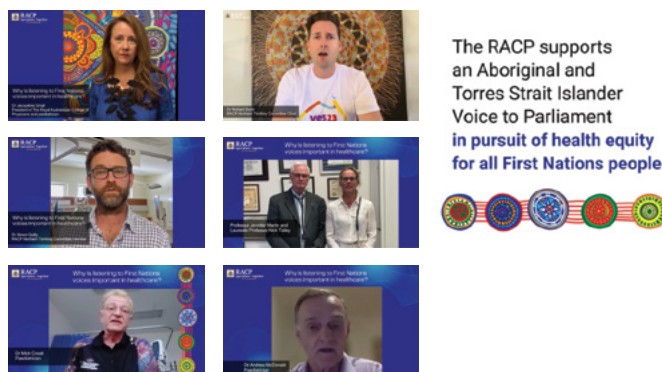
To supplement its public statement supporting The Voice, The RACP undertook a range of activities to inform its members and highlight the importance of listening to First Nations voices in healthcare. The RACP’s members remain unwavering in their commitment to supporting better health outcomes for all First Nations peoples, regardless of the outcome of The Voice referendum.



RACP President-Elect, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP, and Laureate Professor Nick Talley FRACP, support a Voice to Parliament

Key highlights

- RACP [publishes its public statement](#)¹⁹ in support of constitutional recognition and a First Nations Voice to Parliament which include statements from the President RACP (Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP) and The RACP’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee (ATSIH) Chair (Professor Ngiare Brown).
- The public statement was published in the Sydney Morning Herald and Brisbane Times.
- The public statement was also aired on radio (68 Hits) – see [2GB](#)²⁰; [2SM](#)²¹; [4BC](#)²²; [2BS](#)²³; [2CC](#)²⁴; [6PR](#)²⁵.
- RACP signs an [open letter](#)²⁶ along with over 125 medical colleges and leading health organisations in support of The Voice.
- [RACP members from across Australia self-record videos](#)²⁷ explaining the importance of listening to First Nations voices in healthcare.



RACP members support a Voice to Parliament

- 18 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/the-racp-supports-an-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-voice-to-parliament-in-pursuit-of-health-equity-for-all-first-nations-people>
- 19 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/the-racp-supports-an-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-voice-to-parliament-in-pursuit-of-health-equity-for-all-first-nations-people>
- 20 <https://app.box.com/s/7qcn8344wewkbukzz0vpz1itb9dqksbb>
- 21 <https://app.box.com/s/cbesom9mof44olgkysf9rnwihuunsf6u>
- 22 <https://app.box.com/s/x2gh3h3fy57splwjmjgwzk0831k2twvvn>
- 23 <https://app.box.com/s/scx0sjswlps3bby75m577gtvhihlin6pr>
- 24 <https://app.box.com/s/oc0jkdzhmlnbz9ytkelofbdu89r44ze6>
- 25 <https://app.box.com/s/cak81bmnp74o84zny0twdlesv6vduyq>
- 26 https://mcusercontent.com/8a3d58d1cfb663c4d4cefb00d/files/4d887d0a-58f6-574d-2e54-4d4cd6f0d892/Health_Organisations_Say_Yes_to_a_Voice.02.pdf
- 27 www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/all-news/news-details?id=cd7ab6af-bbb2-61c2-b08b-ff01001c3177

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Advocacy

In early 2023, first nations Fellows and Trainees were engaged to inform a RACP response to alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory, resulting in a [media release](#)²⁸ and [submission](#)²⁹ that brought attention to the urgent need for additional community programs to combat the social determinants of alcohol consumption.



RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, Manager of Indigenous Strategy, Lee Bradfield and the Senior Executive Officer for the SA/NT Region, Katherine Economides



RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP NT visit

President visit to the Northern Territory

As a result of that work in Alice Springs with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, visited the Northern Territory between 25 and 30 June 2023, accompanied by the Manager of Indigenous Strategy, Lee Bradfield and the Senior Executive Officer for the SA/NT Region, Katherine Economides. During the trip the President met with members and stakeholders in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. The NT currently has 245 members, seven Overseas Trained Physicians and one non-member Supervisor. During the trip, the President met with approximately 60 members and stakeholders in Darwin, Katherine, and Alice Springs. This was achieved at both formal meetings and a dinner held in each town. At these events, the President highlighted the recently approved [Rural and Regional Strategy](#)³⁰, key policy and advocacy and workforce planning initiatives.

28 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-support-reinstatement-of-nt-alcohol-restrictions-but-more-community-programs-needed-to-support-this>

29 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-feedback-to-the-nt-alcohol-action-plan-2023-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=6c7d31a_8

30 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/about/college-council/regional-rural-and-remote-physician-strategy.pdf?sfvrsn=1bffd01a_8



RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP NT visit

Members meet WA Minister for Corrective Services

In early 2023, The RACP collaborated with Derbarl Yerrigan on a letter to the Premier of Western Australia regarding the incarceration of young people at Casuarina Prison, a maximum-security prison for adult males. This culminated in an invitation to meet with the Minister for Corrective Services and Police, the Hon. Paul Papalia. On 5 September 2023, senior paediatricians, members of The RACP Western Australian Committee, and practitioners from Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service met with Minister Papalia to discuss the health needs of young people in custody, including the need to raise the MACR to 14 years of age, without exception.

Discussions with Minister Papalia resulted in some key outcomes, including:

The key successes were:

- The NT membership unanimously reported grateful appreciation at the President's visit given they are remote and don't often get to engage with the College in this way.
- Holding a member and stakeholder dinner in each town was a successful way of maximising the number of people the President could meet, and a goodwill gesture that members appreciated.
- The President was exposed to a wide variety of health provision in the NT, with opportunity for members to speak freely about their work and about The RACP, therefore building the Presidents understanding of the unique needs in those settings.
- Members expressed appreciation that the President did not visit only the capital Darwin, but also the other two main population centres of Katherine and Alice Springs. This was perceived as a welcome acknowledgement that health delivery and member needs can be quite different across the Territory, despite its small population.
- Ongoing conversations between the Department of Corrective Services and Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service around the delivery of culturally safe health services to young people at Banksia Hill Detention Centre.
- Individualised care plans for all young people at Banksia Hill Detention Centre.
- Collaboration with Western Australian Department of Health to support clinicians and allied healthcare workers to provide 'in reach' health services to young people.
- Creating a mentoring program for young people and staff.
- Plans for the safe expansion of activities and hours for young people outside of cells at Banksia Hill Detention Centre and Casuarina Prison.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Committee (ATSIHC) continues to support the implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Framework across The RACP. Building the Indigenous workforce and cultural safety is a top priority of the Committee.

Building the Indigenous workforce and cultural safety

In July, The RACP launched the [First Nations Trainee Wellbeing Program](#). The program will commence in October and is being delivered by Blak Wattle Coaching & Consulting, an Aboriginal owned and operated organisation. The program runs over six months and includes a series of online group workshops and resources that will utilise Aboriginal knowledge systems to nurture and support the wellbeing and resilience of participants. The program is fully funded for Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander participants.

The RACP Board approved a proposal from the Māori Health Committee to establish a Lead Fellow Māori Health position (2 years), and two Māori Health Registrar positions (1 year each) to reduce cultural loading on The RACP's Māori leadership and provide 'bridge builder' capacity to assist The RACP achieve its strategic goals. An evaluation approach is being developed and it is anticipated that recruitment will be undertaken in early 2024.

The RACP is trialing an equipment fund providing a complimentary physician's briefcase to eligible trainees preparing for their Divisional Clinical Exam (DCE) or other relevant clinical assessments for trainees. 10 out of 20 briefcases have been distributed in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia so far.

Education Learning and Assessment (ELA) continues to draft proposed updates to the new Basic Training Program Curriculum Standards and new Advanced Training Program Common Curriculum Standards to align to The RACP's Professional Standard of cultural safety.

The RACP received 11 applications for the Fee Reimbursement Initiative. This is a 63% increase in participation since the initiative was launched in 2022 and potentially reflects the efforts of The RACP to better engage and build a rapport with the Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander members.

ELA and ATSIHC continue to collaborate with the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) on their cross-RACP Specialist Trainee Support Program (STSP) to support the growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce through the delivery of tailored and culturally appropriate support options. In 2023, this has included: the offer of free access to AIDA's online cultural awareness program for a limited number of RACP's facilitators and supervisors; access to a monthly virtual yarn with Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander trainees from across The RACP for support and networking; trainee workshops and one-on-one coaching support for trainees.



ATSIHC and the MHC Redfern AMS Site Visit With CEO LaVerne Bellea

ATSIHC and Māori Health Committee meeting

In May 2023, ATSIHC and the Māori Health Committee met in Sydney. The meeting was highly productive and focused on building the Indigenous workforce and cultural safety. The two committees also visited the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service to exchange knowledge and information about culturally safe models of care. It was also an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the two committees and establish an ongoing dialogue. For example, it is now a standing order of ATSIHC meetings that the Māori Health Committee Chair provides an update.

The Māori Health Committee, ATSIHC and The RACP Board are due to meet in November 2023. A key focus of both committees, moving into 2024, will be operationalising the terms of the Indigenous Object in the RACP Constitution.

Key highlights

- Members vote overwhelming to amend The RACP Constitution and include an Indigenous Object.
- Members of ATSIHC undertake Australian Institute of Company Directors training – set up via Donna Burns (CEO of AIDA).
- MHC and ATSIHC meet in Sydney.

- Visit to the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service.
- Board approves a public statement in support of the Voice.
- ATSIHC Chair attends The RACP Child Health Summit.

Indigenous Strategic Framework Steering Group

The Indigenous Strategic Framework (ISF) Steering Group (the 'ISF SG') met on 22 March 2022. A key focus of the ISF SG is improving the governance of the ISF to support and enhance delivery of the key outcomes, including a review of the Committee's terms of reference, membership and reporting structures. A meeting with The RACP's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was held highlighting key ISF achievements across The RACP.

The ISF SG has introduced quarterly reporting for 2023. RACP teams and departments are being asked to report on their achievements against the ISF strategic priorities each quarter. The quarterly reports will be used to prepare an annual report to the Board about RACP-wide ISF activity and opportunities.

An Annual ISF Report is currently being developed for the Board, showcasing ISF highlights for 2022.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

An Innovate RAP is being finalised to develop a framework to promote reconciliation across The RACP by ensuring that our actions and priorities reflect and respond to key priorities of First Nations people and contributes to national reconciliation.

The Innovate RAP is a public commitment published on [Reconciliation Australia's website](#). It is a 2-year plan that will commence after the RAP has been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

Teams across The RACP have been invited to share key innovation priorities and actions for the next two years for inclusion in the RAP.



Healthcare Reform

Australian Federal Budget advocacy

The RACP's October 2022 Pre-Budget Submission to the Australian Treasury called on the Australian Government to prioritise measures relevant to delivering and enhancing its commitments to move us towards a sustainable, resilient and future-focused health system for all Australians. The Budget delivered by the Australian Treasurer on Tuesday 25 October 2022 adopted many recommendations The RACP has been advocating for. This Federal Budget [Summary](#)³¹ provides a high-level overview of wins in key advocacy areas. While The RACP welcomed the delivery of several election commitments in the October Budget, it also indicated that the Budget fell short of what is required to protect public healthcare in the evolving crisis.

In early 2023, the RACP delivered the 2023–2024 [Pre-Budget Submission to the Australian Treasury](#)³² and produced an [easy read overview](#)³³ of recommendations as a quick reference guide. Key Pre-Budget recommendations for health reform, equity, prevention and the environment were proposed to the Federal Government (see outcomes below). The Pre-Budget submission sought to improve specialist care for underserved Australians through systemic reform of care delivery, reinstatement of MBS telephone items for long consultations and better targeted training for specialists in rural and regional areas, among other asks. Social media and media channels were used in the run up to the May Budget to optimise the promotion of RACP funding asks. See related media releases [here](#)³⁴ and [here](#)³⁵.



31 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/federal-budget-summary.pdf?sfvrsn=57c1ce1a_4

32 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-2023-24-pre-budget-submission-to-aust-treasury.pdf?sfvrsn=7c43d11a_6

33 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/pre-budget-submission-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=d973d01a_6

34 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-say-government-has-neglected-regional-healthcare-as-patients-go-without-phone-telehealth-items>

35 [College says solution to specialist shortage must start with training more specialists for rural and regional areas \(racp.edu.au\)](#)

The RACP had a number of successful advocacy outcomes identified in the Pre-Budget submission including increased funding for the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector, primary care reforms such as indexing Medicare rebates without freezes so that they are appropriately aligned with inflation, and supporting equitable patient access for low-income families, particularly in rural, regional and remote areas. Successful RACP calls for sustainable long-term funding for Urgent Care Clinics and initial funding for the new Australian Centre for Disease Control were also both identified in the Budget. Other successful advocacy outcomes from the Budget included funding for tobacco control, funding for alcohol and other drugs treatment and opioid substitution therapies. Two additional areas The RACP advocated for which had successful outcomes in the budget included increased availability of homecare packages for older Australians, and funding for a national strategy for silica-related diseases; see The RACP post-Budget [media release](#)³⁶ and [summary](#)³⁶ of RACP Federal Budget outcomes. Health sector [media](#)³⁷ reported on our Budget reply.

The RACP contributes to national health reform planning

The RACP contributed to the Mid-Term Review of the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) Addendum 2020–25, the setting of the Nationally Efficient Price (NEP) and Nationally Efficient Cost (NEC) for Australian Public Hospital Services. Our 2023 submissions to the [Federal Budget](#)³⁸, [NHRA](#)³⁹, [NEP and NEC](#)⁴⁰ will guide ongoing advocacy and engagement. Our submission to the NHRA mid-term review in particular, supported RACP President-Elect, Professor Jennifer Martin's FRACP interview with one of the independent reviewers.



<https://www.croakey.org/reactions-to-the-federal-budget-part-two/>

³⁶ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/australian-federal-budget-summary-2023-24.pdf?sfvrsn=51a4d21a_2

³⁷ <https://www.croakey.org/reactions-to-the-federal-budget-part-two/>

³⁸ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-2023-24-pre-budget-submission-to-aust-treasury.pdf?sfvrsn=7c43d11a_6

³⁹ [racp-submission-to-the-australian-governments-national-health-reform-agreement-nhra-addendum-2020-2025-mid-term-review.pdf](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-australian-governments-national-health-reform-agreement-nhra-addendum-2020-2025-mid-term-review.pdf)

⁴⁰ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-ihacpa-pricing-framework-24-25.pdf?sfvrsn=1635d51a_4

Medicare and workforce reforms

Strengthening Medicare reforms have been a continuing point of focus for The RACP in 2023, with advocacy directed toward the Department of Health and Aged Care and Minister Butler centring on specialist inclusion in primary care reform for overall improved access for patients, and reduced strain on the hospital system. RACP positions on primary care reform were well promoted in [public media](#)⁴¹, see the media releases [here](#)⁴² and [here](#)⁴³.

The RACP also engaged with the Department of Health and Aged Care on planning proposals for the physician workforce and MBS case conferencing items with the aim of improving the distribution of physicians and systems for consultant physician to GP integration. An analysis of the physician workforce, data collection systems for workforce planning, and specialist case conferencing analysis have supported this engagement. RACP advocacy impressing the urgency of building the resilience of the specialist workforce and patient access was highlighted in a 2023 ABC [news piece](#)⁴⁴.

RACP 2023 Healthcare Reform Virtual Town Hall with Minister Butler

On May 31 RACP members joined our virtual Town Hall event with The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP and The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, on integrated multidisciplinary care.

In his opening statement, the Minister provided an overview of the key challenges faced by the Australian health care system: long standing demographic changes and in particular an ageing population, steadily increasing rates of complex chronic diseases, pressures on the Medicare system from rebate freezes and the ongoing impacts of the COVID pandemic, including an exhausted health workforce, and its mental health impacts on all Australians. Minister Butler went on to outline the Government's particular focus on strengthening Medicare and General Practice and accelerating the transition to digital health to



THE RACP HEALTHCARE REFORM VIRTUAL TOWN HALL 2023

WITH AUSTRALIAN HEALTH MINISTER MARK BUTLER



THE HON
MARK BUTLER MP
Australian Minister for
Health and Aged Care



DR JACQUELINE SMALL
RACP President and
paediatrician



DR TONY MYLIUS AM
Cardiologist and
consultant physician



MS DEBRA LETICA
RACP Consumer Advisory
Group Consumer Co-Chair



PROF. VASI NAGANATHAN
Australian and New Zealand Society
of Geriatric Medicine President



PROF. JENNIFER MARTIN
RACP President-Elect
and physician



MONDAY, 31 MAY: 6.30PM - 7.30PM AEST | [BIT.LY/RACPTOWNHALL](https://bit.ly/racptownhall)

RACP 2023 Healthcare Reform Virtual Town Hall with Minister Butler

41 <https://www.croakey.org/wrapping-reactions-to-the-strengthening-medicare-taskforce-report/>

42 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/patients-to-suffer-without-including-specialist-care-in-medicare-reform>

43 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/racp-welcomes-report-from-medicare-taskforce-and-the-focus-on-multidisciplinary-care-but-patients-need-more-access-to-specialist-care#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20recommendations%20of.and%20hospital%20services%20with%20primary>

44 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-20/specialist-wait-times-blow-out-years-waiting-list/102232032>

better connect different parts of the health system with the patient at the centre. The Minister acknowledged that pressures in primary care result in pressures on other parts of the health system, particularly hospitals and recognised the need for system integration that goes beyond General Practice teams and includes specialists. He acknowledged The RACP as an important stakeholder with whom the Government will collaborate with in this area.

The discussion with the Minister was followed by presentations on effective multidisciplinary care models from the Co-Chairs of the Australian Health Care Reform Working Group, Dr Tony Mylius FRACP who presented on improving comprehensive community based complex care through The RACP Model for Chronic Care Management and Ms Debra Letica, who shared her consumer/carer perspective on health reform to establish a truly integrated health system. Dr Mylius and Ms Letica's presentations were followed by Professor Vasi Naganathan FRACP, Immediate Past President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Geriatric Medicine (ANZGSM) and member of the Australian Health Care Reform Working Group, presenting on models of multidisciplinary care to improve care for older people.

The Town Hall was closed by RACP President-Elect and the CPAC Chair, Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP who highlighted that health reform and in particular integrated care and putting consumers at the centre of the health system are ongoing policy and advocacy priorities of the College led by the Australian Health Care Reform Working Group. Professor Martin encouraged all attendees to get involved in the College's policy and advocacy work.

The recording of the event is available [online](#)⁴⁵ and has been promoted to members via RACP channels.

Strengthening the case for specialist telehealth

Reinstating specialist MBS telehealth items is a core advocacy priority of The RACP. The RACP has worked with multiple government agencies through 2023 to develop enduring and sustainable policies for expanded specialist access to telehealth and shared the supporting evidence base.

The RACP lodged a [submission](#)⁴⁶ to the Medical Board of Australia's Draft revised Guidelines for Telehealth consultations with patients in February 2023, incorporating patient and practitioner case studies revealing the benefits of telehealth for underserved communities.

At the request of The Hon Mark Butler MP The RACP also updated and expanded a rapid review on the efficacy of phone telehealth compared to video consultations through 2023 to support advocacy. The rapid review promotes the evidence base supporting reinstatement of all phone consultations to frame ongoing Government-facing advocacy on longer telephone consultations. The review was shared with The Hon Mark Butler MP and advice derived from the rapid review contributed to the MBS Continuous Review Advisory Committee for its Telehealth Principles Review. To amplify the voices of priority patient communities with barriers to accessing specialist care, the rapid review will continue to be expanded and promoted.

Our telehealth advocacy was the focus of a [media release](#)⁴⁷ that was picked-up by key regional news outlets in [Canberra](#)⁴⁸, [Newcastle NSW](#)⁴⁹, [Bega NSW](#)⁵⁰.

45 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/all-events/past-event-presentations#:~:text=2023%20Healthcare%20Reform%20Virtual%20Town%20Hall%20%E2%80%93%20putting%20the%20patient%20at%20the%20centre>

46 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-medical-board-of-australia-s-draft-revised-guidelines-for-telehealth-consultations-with-patients.pdf?sfvrsn=bc63d01a_8

47 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-say-government-has-neglected-regional-healthcare-as-patients-go-without-phone-telehealth-items>

48 <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8166859/calls-to-reinstate-telehealth-a-lifeline-in-the-bush/>

49 <https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/8166859/calls-to-reinstate-telehealth-a-lifeline-in-the-bush/>

50 <https://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/story/8166859/calls-to-reinstate-telehealth-a-lifeline-in-the-bush/>

“



We need policymakers to recognise the importance of patient choice in support of person-centred practice. For regional areas in particular, there is a chronic lack of access to specialist health care.

President, RACP, Dr Small: media release calling on Government to restore long phone-based telehealth items to the MBS

In Aotearoa New Zealand, The RACP responded to the Medical Council of New Zealand’s consultation on its updated Telehealth Statement, emphasising in our [submission](#)⁵¹ the importance of ensuring equitable access to care and highlighting the risk of patients receiving care through telehealth from doctors outside of the jurisdiction of the New Zealand Medical Council (NZMC).



President RACP, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP and Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care discuss integrated care

Showcasing the role of specialist physicians in integrated Care

The RACP has advocated to decision makers across the political spectrum promoting the need for innovative integrated care reform in 2023. Cohesion between the structures that make up the overall health system for improved patient access to specialists and seamlessness in the patient journey are essential for the success of integrated care.

The RACP discussed with The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Honorable Senator Anne Ruston, Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care, and Dr Michelle Ananda Rajah MP FRACP key activities for positive patient outcomes resulting from integrated care models.

In 2023, RACP Aotearoa New Zealand promoted the need to include Māori and Pacific Islander communities in planning for health system reforms and innovative models of care, highlighting the role of innovation in improving patient access and equity for priority communities in a [media release](#)⁵².

National Medicines Policy

The RACP continued to engage in the review of the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care’s National Medicines Policy (NMP). In October, The RACP made its third submission to inform the NMP Review which focuses on three important areas that the revised NMP needs to adequately address to be effective:

1. governance, accountability, evaluation and resourcing;
2. improving pathways to allow equitable access to needed treatments for all Australians and
3. embedding relevant specialist advice throughout the NMP process.

51 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-mcnz-updated-telehealth-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=10c8d21a_4

52 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/innovations-in-health-must-work-to-reduce-health-inequities-says-racp>

The Australian Health Care Reform Working Group

The RACP's Australian Health Care Reform Working Group was set up to provide thought leadership and advanced expertise The RACP's College Policy & Advocacy Council (CPAC) and other RACP bodies on healthcare reform and service integration and to lead The RACP's policy and advocacy work in this area as set out in the [CPAC Plan 2022–2026](#)⁵³ and annual CPAC work plan.

The Working Group held its first meeting in early March and its second meeting in mid-August. It is currently developing its workplan which will assist them in prosecuting the case for systemic reforms of health care and the central role of specialists in multidisciplinary integrated care.

In collaboration with Viktoria Stein, Leiden University Medical Centre, The Netherlands, the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Dr Tony Mylius FRACP and Ms Deb Letica, will deliver a workshop on strengthening community engagement in integrated care at the 3rd Asia Pacific Conference on Integrated Care (APIC3) in November 2023.

Improving obesity and type 2 diabetes prevention and treatment

Improving prevention and treatment for obesity and type 2 diabetes across our diverse population is an urgent priority, with these two chronic conditions driving an escalating proportion of hospital admissions. 2023 has seen The RACP expand advocacy on the system changes needed to reduce the rates of these conditions, provide better specialist-integrated treatment within the community, and provide broader access to evidence-based treatments and surgeries for obesity and diabetes.

The RACP produced a rapid review of evidence for regulations restricting junk food and sugary drink advertising to children to support the new [Switch Off The Junk campaign](#)⁵⁴ and related advocacy. The rapid review has been shared with Federal Independent MP Dr Sophie Scamps FRACGP and other decision makers with a common goal of reducing advertising exposure for children on all forms of media through comprehensive national regulation.

The RACP amplified its call for systemic prevention initiatives and health system reforms for type 2 diabetes and obesity in a [submission](#)⁵⁵ to the 2023 Parliamentary Inquiry on Diabetes. In addition to prevention, need for improved access to bariatric surgeries in public hospitals and pharmacotherapies for obesity was stressed in the submission. Following the submission, Professor Louise Baur AM FRACP, Professor of Child & Adolescent Health, Sydney Medical School, represented The RACP at the inquiry [hearing](#)⁵⁶ at Canberra's Parliament House on 15 September. The RACP became a trusted advisor to the inquiry and was requested to provide further supplementary evidence for the report back to Federal Parliament after the hearing.

The RACP inquiry recommendations were reported in media outlets prior to and post the inquiry, including on Channel 9 (national) and Channel 7.



Channel 9 reported on RACP's recommendations from the 2023 Parliamentary Inquiry on Diabetes

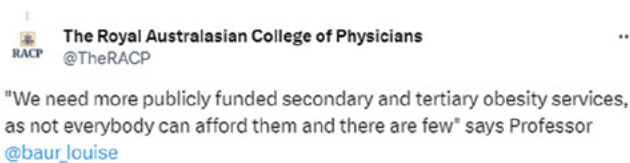
53 [creating-equitable-and-healthier-communities-college-policy-and-advocacy-council-plan-2022-2026.pdf](#) (racp.edu.au)

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

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

56 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=committees/commrep/27370/&sid=0008

The RACP also raised awareness of overweight, obesity, obesity prevention and stigma in the lead up to World Obesity Day 2023 with key partners from the Obesity Policy Coalition and the Obesity Collective.



11:37 AM · Sep 25, 2023 · 34 Views

Professor Louise Baur AM FRACP, raises awareness for improvements to prevention and treatment for obesity

An Australian Center for Disease Control

As the Federal Government has initiated planning for the establishment of the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), The RACP has actively advocated for a centre that monitors, reports on, and provides guidance for the national management of both transmissible and chronic diseases, both of which exacerbate health inequalities for priority patient populations.

Advocacy commenced in late 2022, with The RACP represented at a Department of Health and Aged Care CDC workshop by Professor Jennifer Martin FRACP, RACP President-Elect, and Dr Leena Gupta FAFPHM. Post the workshop The RACP developed a significant [submission](#)⁵⁷ to the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care outlining our vision for the CDC, its functions, role and structure. The submission included significant support from AAFPHM, AFOEM, the COVID-ERG, the PAAG, ASID and other Specialty Societies. It represents the first steps toward formal engagement with the government and enhancing recognition of the skills physicians can bring to the CDC initiative.

In early 2023 RACP advocacy proved successful with the release of the Department of Health and Aged Care's CDC stakeholder consultation summary [report](#)⁵⁸. The need for a CDC that focuses on prevention for communicable and chronic diseases and supports the public health workforce was acknowledged in the CDC stakeholder consultation summary report, consistent with The RACP submission and in synergy with broader public health sector calls.

57 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-centre-for-disease-control-and-prevention.pdf?sfvrsn=6bd1d11a_10

58 <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/centre-for-disease-control-stakeholder-consultation-report>

59 <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/clinical-care-standards/hip-fracture-care-clinical-care-standard>

Upholding quality and safety in clinical care

The RACP works closely on a routine basis with the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) and RACP Specialty Societies to ensure that the clinical care provided in hospitals and other care settings is evidence-based, risk managed and promoted in clinical guidelines.

Key outcomes of this collaborative work in 2023 included RACP endorsement of the ACSQHC [Hip Fracture Care Clinical Care Standard](#)⁵⁹ and the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA) position statements Role of bidirectional endoscopy (same-day upper and lower gastrointestinal endoscopy) and Quality upper gastrointestinal endoscopy.



As part of a global movement, Evolve is a flagship initiative led by physicians and The RACP to drive high-value, high-quality care in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Evolve is a founding member of Choosing Wisely® in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, with all Evolve 'Top-Five' recommendations part of the Choosing Wisely campaign.

Evolve is a partnership between The RACP and its Specialty Societies. The movement provides a trusted process for each Specialty Society to remain up to date with the latest evidence. The development of Evolve 'Top-Five' recommendations is:

- Fellow-led, collaborative, evidence and consensus-based.
- Flexible; guided by agreed criteria, the process allows for adaptability in approach and
- Pathways tailored to Specialty Societies.
- Transparent.

The primary objective of Evolve is to ensure improved patient safety and quality of care through a reduction in practices that are low value. Through Evolve, The RACP aims to enable its Fellows and trainees to be leaders in high value, high quality care.

Evolve development

The [Evolve Strategy 2022–26](#)⁶⁰, Implementation Plan and [Consultation Summary](#)⁶¹ documents were approved by the CPAC on 30 June 2023. The Strategy and Implementation Plan are underpinned by the leadership and involvement of RACP Members, The RACP’s Consumer Advisory Group, the Evolve Policy & Advocacy Interest Group (PAIG), and The RACP’s Divisions, Chapters, Faculties and affiliated Specialty Societies.

The Evolve PAIG membership has seen an increase by 6% in the last 12 months to 307 total members. Our PAIG members support Evolve activities; inputting to consultations, engaging with promotions, and are a critical source of advice and network for the Evolve program.

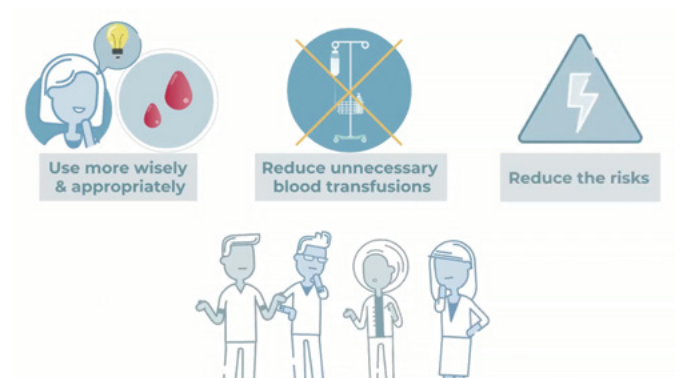
Over February to May this year, The RACP produced 4 Evolve animations to complement existing Evolve Top-5 recommendations for:

- [The Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology](#)⁶²
- [The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand Paediatrics](#)⁶³
- [The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand Adult](#)⁶⁴
- [The Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion](#)⁶⁵

The RACP has promoted the Evolve animations on the [Evolve website](#)⁶⁶, via social media, the ROC and to the Evolve PAIG on a bi-monthly basis.



Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology animation video



Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion animation video

60 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/secured-documents-library/evolve/evolve-strategy-2022-2026.pdf>

61 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/secured-documents-library/evolve/evolve-strategy-implementation-plan-2022-26-consultation-summary.pdf>

62 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOt81Ua8Izg>

63 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U_noGiDkMQ

64 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0EySpZt5M>

65 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Uif3u5lQH0>

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

Dr Joanna Lawrence FRACP led the development of a new case study based on an Evolve recommendation from the Paediatrics and Child Health Division on not undertaking x-rays for diagnosis of bronchiolitis in children and not routinely prescribing salbutamol or systemic corticosteroids to treat bronchiolitis in children.⁶⁷ The case study has been promoted to members.

The RACP has also progressed the development of 2 case studies that reflect recommendation 4 and 5 of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusions Evolve Top-5 recommendations⁶⁸.

From 2–5 April, The RACP hosted an Evolve exhibition at the Australian Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting to promote the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine RACP Evolve Top-5 recommendations⁶⁹.

In May The RACP developed and promoted an Australian and New Zealand Blood Transfusion Evolve Top-5 recommendations infographic⁷⁰, via social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) and the ROC.

In April and May, The RACP met with the ACSQHC on Evolve, including climate change and health in low value care work and opportunities for continuing professional development.

From 4–6 September, The RACP hosted an Evolve exhibition at the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology Annual Scientific Meeting 2023 to promote the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology RACP Evolve Top-5 recommendations⁷¹.

The RACP has commenced the development of new Evolve Top-5 recommendations lists for:

- Cardiology Society of Australia and New Zealand
- Human Genetics Society of Australasia
- New Zealand Paediatric, Gastroenterology Services Clinical Network.

67 [evolve.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/pchd_evolve-bronchiolitis-xray-recommendation-case-study-final82b44a1f9dbe66399adfff000feff52-\(3\).pdf?sfvrsn=be092c74_0](https://evolve.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/pchd_evolve-bronchiolitis-xray-recommendation-case-study-final82b44a1f9dbe66399adfff000feff52-(3).pdf?sfvrsn=be092c74_0)

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

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

70 https://evolve.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/evolve-infographics-finaledc24a1f9dbe66399adfff0000feff52.pdf?sfvrsn=8a7c2c74_0

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

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



The new ANZSBT Evolve Recommendations Infographic

The review of Evolve Top-5 recommendations for the Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists⁷² is pending external consultation with Choosing Wisely (which is currently being reviewed by the ACSQHC).



Climate and Justice



Health and Climate Change

RACP has informed the development of Australia's first National Health and Climate Strategy

The Australian Government announced its commitment to a National Health and Climate Strategy (National Strategy) and the establishment of a National Health Sustainability and Climate Unit last year, along with funding in the October 2022 budget.

This comes after years of advocacy and policy work by The RACP and others in the health sector. The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, was invited to join the Chief Medical Officer Advisory Group (CMOAG), which has informed the development and implementation of the National Strategy and many recommendations by The RACP have been accepted into this national strategy. The Hon Mark Butler MP, also acknowledged The RACPs successful advocacy in securing the strategy at the Greening the Health Care Sector conference.



ABC News: RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small, voices concerns the healthcare system is unprepared for extreme weather events

Dr Small's invitation to join CMOAG is a recognition of the work The RACP has done in health and climate change. It has been an opportunity to draw on The RACP membership's expertise to contribute to a National Strategy that harnesses health benefits and contributes to health equity.

The RACP made a [comprehensive submission](#)⁷³ to the National Strategy's consultation paper, advocating for a comprehensive approach that prioritises building healthy and climate resilient communities alongside a health systems focus. We consulted with RACP bodies and Specialty Societies and received significant member input and engagement, as well as input from teams across The RACP.

During the consultation period, The RACP engaged with health stakeholders concerned about climate change and health and met with officials from the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care. Further, RACP members had numerous opportunities to provide expert input into the Strategy. Professor Lynne Madden FAFPHM, Chair of The RACP-led Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee attended a roundtable at Parliament House in May and Associate Professor Linda Selvey FAFPHM, Chair of The RACP's Climate Change and Health Working Group attended an online workshop on the National Strategy in July.

The RACP continues to meet regularly with the Assistant Secretary of the Environmental Health and Climate Change Branch of the Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, to advocate for the asks in our National Strategy submission. We will continue to engage in responsive and proactive advocacy for climate action to support the building of healthy, climate resilient communities and environmentally sustainable, climate resilient healthcare systems. Our [media release](#)⁷⁴ during extreme heat in September was an example of this.

73 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-national-health-and-climate-strategy-consultation.pdf?sfvrsn=2c07d51a_8

74 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/australia-isn-t-ready-for-extreme-weather-climate-and-health-strategy-urgently-needed>



CANBERRATIMES.COM.AU

Health system 'unprepared' for next climate disaster

Climate change is causing an increase in extreme weather events and...

RACP's joint statement received significant media and social media coverage – AAP media

Medical groups raise climate alarm

By Isabel Moussalli

Broadcast Wed 2 Aug 2023 at 6:00am



Twelve of Australia's top medical groups are warning the nation's healthcare system isn't prepared for extreme weather events. (ABC News: Shelley Lloyd)

RACP's joint statement received significant media and social media coverage – AAP media

Multi-college advocacy led by The RACP receives extensive media coverage

The RACP has been working to bring together medical colleges over the last few years and we are now working with 12 other colleges representing over 100,000 health workers, to call for climate health action to ensure populations can thrive in the face of climate change and healthcare systems can continue to meet their needs.

This year RACP led a [joint statement](#)⁷⁵ by this coalition of 13 medical colleges calling for the National Health and Climate Strategy to be fully funded, have National Cabinet sign-off, be guided by First Nations knowledge and leadership, and build healthy and climate resilient communities. The joint statement received significant media and social media coverage, including The RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small appearing on [ABC TV in a live interview](#)⁷⁶. The [Australian Associated Press](#)⁷⁷ also picked up the statement as did several radio stations, including [ABC AM Radio](#)⁷⁸.

The RACP's multi-college work is led by the Climate Change and Health Multi-College Advisory Committee. The Committee and sub-groups of the Committee met numerous times in 2023, with a focus on climate adaptation and the National Strategy. We were fortunate to have Madeleine Skellern, Director of the National Health, Sustainability and Climate Unit, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care join the Committee's July meeting. This was a valuable opportunity to hear directly from the Government on the National Strategy and for medical colleges to provide their input directly.

75 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/australia-s-healthcare-system-must-get-ready-for-the-next-climate-disaster>

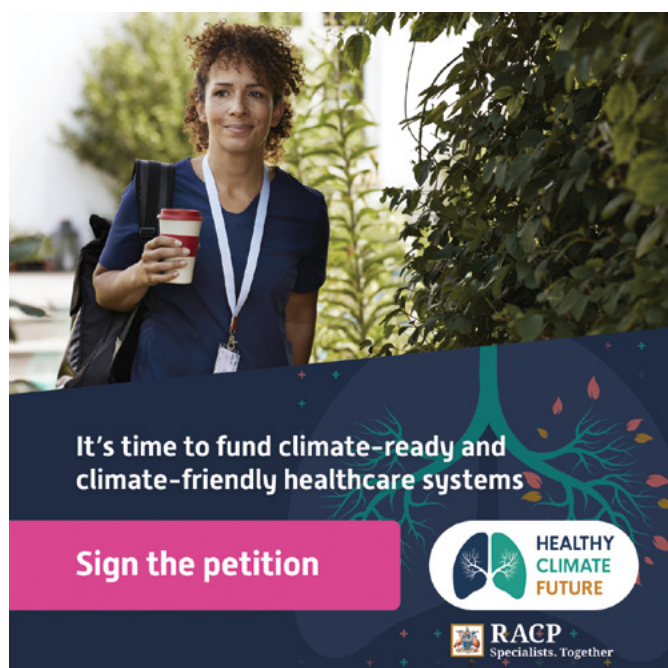
76 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-02/major-concerns-healthcare-system-unprepared-for/102678414>

77 <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8292425/health-system-unprepared-for-next-climate-disaster/>

78 <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/am/eam-climate-healthcare/102676780>

Healthy Climate Future campaign a strong basis for advocacy

Following our engagement in the National Strategy development process, we updated our [Healthy Climate Future campaign petition](#)⁷⁹ to call for funding to support the National Strategy. P&A is working with 12 other medical colleges to promote and grow the campaign, which is now also supported by 11 specialty societies.



The Healthy Climate Future petition

Earlier in 2023, the Healthy Climate Future campaign asks were adapted for the NSW State election. The campaign website was an important tool as part of our broader election advocacy. We plan to continue to build on our national asks to support advocacy in state and territory elections in 2024.

Fossil fuels will continue to be a focus within climate change and health

In August, The RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP wrote to the [Australian Prime Minister](#)⁸⁰ highlighting the health harms of fossil fuels. This followed a letter that was cosigned by Dr Small, the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee Professor Ngiare Brown, and the Deputy Chair of the NT Regional Committee Dr Felicity Hodder FRACP, to the [Hon Natasha Fyles MLA](#)⁸¹, NT Chief Minister in June on the same matter. Related to these letters, we promoted the Climate and Health Day of Action initiated by Dr. Monique Ryan MP and held in Canberra in August which was attended by many members.

Continuing our advocacy in health and climate change, The RACP is making a submission to the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct Senate Inquiry. Our submission will urge the Australian Government to ensure that health impacts are a central consideration in relation to decisions on fossil fuel projects. Our submission on the Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023 also addresses the importance of health impacts when making decisions on fossil fuels. The legislation also requires decision-makers to consider the health of current and future generations of children when making other key decisions likely to contribute to climate change.

The RACP is in the early stages of scoping a position statement on health and fossil fuels. This position statement is an important next step in strengthening our climate change and health policy work. Once the position statement is approved and complete, The RACP will be better able to engage in matters relating to health and fossil fuels.

79 <https://healthyclimatefuture.org.au/sign-the-petition/>

80 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/letter-to-the-prime-minister-on-the-health-harms-of-fossil-fuels.pdf?sfvrsn=8541d41a_4

81 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/letter-to-the-northern-territory-chief-minister-on-the-health-harms-of-fossil-fuels.pdf?sfvrsn=e541d41a_6

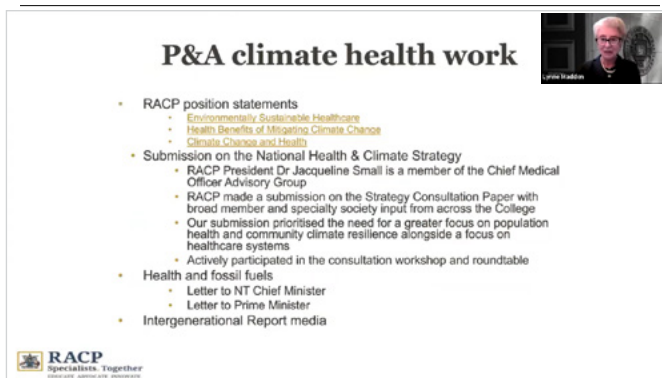
Ongoing advocacy key to continuing momentum behind climate health action

Alongside our focus on the National Strategy, The RACP has been engaging in other climate change and health events and opportunities.

Professor Lynne Madden FAFPHM represented The RACP at the annual Australian Medical Association (AMA) and Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) annual webinar on climate change and health in September. Professor Madden shared The RACP’s climate change and health work in policy, advocacy, and continuing professional development resource development. Prof Madden also shared The RACP’s progress with becoming a more environmentally sustainable College. The RACP endorsed a follow-up [communiqué led by DEA and the AMA](#)⁸² calling for increased investment in sustainable healthcare and urgent action on climate change.

Associate Professor Linda Selvey FAFPHM attended the National Resilience Taskforce health sector roundtable on national crisis response and recovery, run by the Department of Home Affairs in September. Associate Professor Selvey raised our key asks around climate resilience, prevention, and the role of the Australia Centre for Disease Control. Following Associate Professor Selvey’s attendance we made a submission on the Australian Government’s Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response discussion paper.

International collaboration is also important in climate change and health. In June, Dr Arnagretta Hunter FRACP, a member of The RACP’s Climate Change and Health Working Group and member of CPAC Executive Committee, presented at a virtual meeting of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) in London’s newly formed Sustainability in Healthcare and Climate Change Advisory Group.



Professor Lynne Madden presenting at AMA/DEA webinar: Australian doctors: driving action on climate change



Professor Lynne Madden presenting at AMA/DEA webinar: Australian doctors: driving action on climate change

82 <https://www.ama.com.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/AMA%20DEA%20Webinar%20Communique%202023.pdf>

Justice and Equity

Engagement with Australian Federal Treasury on climate and Measuring What Matters

As part of our work on climate change and health we provided advice to the Australian Federal Treasury on focus areas for modelling the economic costs of climate change impacts on health. Further we have provided feedback to the Australian Government's Measuring What Matters consultations (see our submissions [here](#)⁸⁶ and [here](#)⁸⁷) emphasising The RACP's key priorities for national quality of life indicators. These priorities included reflecting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, centring equity in all measures, accounting for needs for priority populations, and accounting for climate change impacts on health.

'Raise the Age' gains momentum

As a founding member of the Raise the Age National Steering Committee, The RACP continues to campaign for a nationally consistent minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) of 14 years, without exception. In late November 2022, The RACP led an [open letter](#)⁸⁸, which was signed by other medical colleges, calling for the release of the Attorney Generals' report into raising the age of criminal responsibility. The letter received prominent media coverage^{89 90 91 92}. Following this, the Independent Member for Curtin in WA (Kate Chaney) asked a question in Parliament about the report's release. In the response, Commonwealth Attorney General Mark Dreyfus replied that he has asked for the release of the report to be put on the agenda of the next Standing Council of Attorney Generals meeting in December, for decision. Our letter helped to add weight to a [Four Corners story](#)⁹³ and we played a part in this important development.

The RACP published a [public statement](#)⁹⁴ in the lead up to the Standing Council of Attorneys General (SCAG) meeting in April 2023, urging all state and territory governments to raise the MACR to 14 years, without exception.

86 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-measuring-what-matters.pdf?sfvrsn=76e8d21a_4

87 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-australian-government-measuring-what-matters.pdf?sfvrsn=47fd01a_4

88 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/all-news/news-details?id=29d8afaf-bbb2-61c2-b08b-ff01001c3177>

89 <https://www.9news.com.au/national/australian-medical-colleges-call-for-age-of-criminal-responsibility-to-be-raised/f634af68-d083-49e8-8a6d-3384cf6c8b5e>

90 <https://www.croakey.org/australian-governments-under-fire-for-harming-children/>

91 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-29/nt-to-raise-criminal-age-of-responsibility-how-will-it-work/101688012>

92 https://thewest.com.au/news/crime/aust-youth-detention-is-a-national-shame-c-8858979?utm_source=csp&utm_medium=portal&utm_campaign=Meltwater&token=xVgfBvPVvdtl6p14tE5M5pq8Kvll6f4fcoLOxLeDfHahGM%2FmN%2FVDg7iNWNsx1dD4q9icviBgABDBp%2BDNksv6XA%3D%3D#tbl-em-lnmfn81oolhbhn65a7t

93 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-15/buried-report-on-youth-detention-raising-the-age/101635706>

94 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/paediatricians-urge-council-of-attorneys-general-to-listen-to-medical-advice-and-raise-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility>

Prior to the SCAG meeting, the Victorian Government announced that it will raise the MACR to 12 years of age in 2024 and then 14 years in 2027. The RACP sent a letter to the Victorian Government and made a public [statement](#)⁹⁵ stating that this decision did not go far enough, highlighting the medical evidence supporting the need to raise the MACR to at least 14 years.

Following the SCAG meeting, the ACT Government announced that it will raise the MACR to 14 years via a staged process (12 years of age in 2023 and then 14 years by July 2025). The RACP again responded to this announcement with a letter, citing its opposition to a phased approach to raising the MACR, urging the ACT Government to raise the age to 14 years without delay and with no exceptions.

In June 2023, the ACT Government invited The RACP to give evidence at its Inquiry into the Justice (Age of Criminal Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2023. The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small, attended the hearing, providing expert evidence relating to the health and medical reasons in support of raising the MACR to 14 years. Dr Small highlighted the developmental vulnerabilities of children under the age of 14 years and the harms associated with criminalisation, particularly from too early an age. Other members of the Raise the Age National Steering Committee were also in attendance, including Maggie Munn (National Director of Change the Record).

The ACT Government released the findings from its inquiry into raising the MACR to 14 years. Despite our evidence and advice, the legislative assembly maintains its commitment to raising the MACR to 12 years and then 14 years in 2025, with exceptions for more serious offences (e.g. murder and sexual offences). The legislative assembly did, however, note our evidence and the need to actively include paediatricians and other child health experts when developing therapeutic intervention orders and establishing a new therapeutic support panel to support young people whose behaviour may otherwise be criminalised.

Raise the Age position statement and advocacy plan refresh

The RACP is developing a new position statement to support ongoing advocacy in the Raise the Age campaign. The position statement aims to synthesise the medical and health evidence that supports a higher MACR of 14 years or more. It also aims to identify the health programs and services needed to support the health of children and young people under 14 years who are incarcerated or who are at risk of being incarcerated. The position statement will be used to inform the development of an updated advocacy plan.

⁹⁵ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/listen-to-the-experts-paediatricians-urge-victorian-government-not-to-back-down-on-decision-to-raise-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility>



Populations in Focus



Advocacy Campaigns

Key campaigns include The RACP Australian Kids Catch Up, RACP Switch off the Junk and supporting Thrive by Five.



Kids Catch Up campaign

Kids Catch Up

The Kids Catch up (KCU) campaign⁹⁶ continues to call 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. Over the next 6 months, the six KCU campaign policy asks⁹⁷ will move from a COVID focus to align more broadly with The RACP child health advocacy strategy⁹⁸ focus areas and addressing inequities in child health and wellbeing.

A focus for the KCU campaign this year has been to engage and build supporter numbers. This has been achieved through a new mini campaign, #SwitchOffTheJunk, which included a petition and a series of Facebook and Instagram advertising.

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

97 <https://kidscatchup.org.au/about/>

98 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

Switch off the Junk

In June 2023, the Kids Catch Up campaign launched a mini campaign⁹⁹ targeting the marketing and advertising of junk food to children and young people called Switch off the Junk¹⁰⁰. The launch of Switch off the Junk resulted in national media coverage by the ABC: Junk food ads targeted¹⁰¹ ABC The World Today, 19 June and ABC Online, 19 June; Junk food advertising aimed at children the target of proposed law designed to tackle childhood obesity¹⁰² positive social media engagement, and 83 RACP members taking action by signing a petition in support. Members who want to get involved can sign up here: <https://kidscatchup.org.au/switch-off-the-junk/>¹⁰³

The launch of Switch off the Junk coincided with the introduction to the Australian Parliament of a Private Member's Bill to regulate junk food advertising to children by Independent MP, Dr Sophie Scamps. The RACP has been closely consulted with during the development of this Bill, with Professor Nitin Kapur FRACP, PCHD President, involved.



 **The Royal Australasian College of Physicians**
@TheRACP

Our [#SwitchOffTheJunk](#) campaign lends the support of physicians and paediatricians to Private Member [@SophieScamps](#)' Healthy Kids Advertising Bill. The Bill is to regulate unhealthy food and sugary drink advertising to children.
aph.gov.au/Parliamentary...



The graphic features a dark blue background. On the left, a white rounded rectangle contains the text 'SWITCH OFF THE JUNK' in bold, colorful letters. To the right, white text reads 'Let's get kids' health back on track.' Below this is the 'KIDS CATCH UP' logo. At the bottom, a white box contains the website 'kidscatchup.org.au', the campaign name 'Switch off the Junk - Let's get kids' health back on track', and a short paragraph: 'Kids are exposed to more than 25 junk food ads every single day. This saturation of junk foods ads is taking its toll. It's time to switch off the junk.'

#SwitchOffTheJunk campaign

 You Retweeted
 **Prof Nitin Kapur** @dmitinkapur · Feb 10
Thanks [@SophieScamps](#) for bringing together the think tank to discuss ideas on how to regulate the junk food advertising targeted towards children [@TheRACP](#) [@kerrie_aust](#) [@nncicc](#) [@terryslevin](#) [@janemartinopc](#)



Professor Nitin Kapur FRACP, PCHD President, with Independent MP Dr Sophie Scamps and others, at Parliament House

99 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/paediatricians-launch-campaign-to-crackdown-on-junk-food-advertising---targeting-childhood-obesity>

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

101 <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/worldtoday/junk-food-ads-targeted/102496114>

102 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-19/junk-food-ads-ban-bill-hoped-to-decrease-childhood-obesity/102496782>

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

The key positions within the Switch off the Junk campaign are:

- Support for a national regulatory system administered at arms-length from the marketing industry that applies to all forms of radio, television and online advertising for children and young people.
- Clearly define healthy, unhealthy, processed, and ultra-processed foods to facilitate comprehensive national regulatory reform.
- Grow public awareness of the need for this regulatory change.

The RACP has engaged in several meetings with government and key stakeholders to discuss the need for regulation of junk food advertising targeting children and the Switch off the Junk campaign, which have also included the Chief of Staff for Federal Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland MP.

Thrive by Five

The RACP continues to engage with the [Thrive by Five campaign](https://thrivebyfive.org.au/)¹⁰⁴, which we endorsed in early 2022 to become a partner of the campaign. Weekly meetings include updates on Federal Budget opportunities, events, regional and rural work, various inquiries, and state-based campaigns.

The thrive by Five campaign is currently focused on:

- Supporting children with disability and developmental needs, including integrating health and disability support services with early education and care centres and providing additional training and resources to early childhood educators and early learning centres.
- Increasing wages for early childhood educators.

Pandemic-related issues

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, The RACP has strongly advocated for the health and safety of our members and the communities we serve as a major priority. As COVID-19 becomes endemic in much of the world, focus has shifted to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on communities, and the importance of building an equitable and resilient health system, particularly as we evaluate the lasting impacts and plan for future pandemics.

National Clinical Evidence Taskforce

The RACP continues to be involved with the National Clinical Evidence Taskforce, which has expanded its scope from COVID-19 to other diseases, such as MPox, to support Australia's healthcare professionals caring for people with urgent and emerging diseases, by providing continually updated, evidence-based clinical guidelines. (Refer to Sexual Health section for more details on page 44).

The Taskforce continues to identify, evaluate and synthesise evidence to be used as the basis of new recommendations for the clinical care of people with emerging diseases. COVID-19 remains a focus of the Taskforce, with new recommendations reviewed and approved by The RACP COVID-19 Expert Reference Group (COVID ERG). The RACP has been a member of the Taskforce Steering Committee since late March 2020 and is represented by COVID ERG member, Associate Professor Asha Bowen FRACP.

¹⁰⁴ <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/>

National GP Peak Bodies COVID-19 Group

The National GP Peak Body COVID-19 Response group was established in March 2020 and chaired by Professor Michael Kidd, Deputy Chief Medical Officer. This group was an opportunity for peak medical bodies to provide feedback to the Department of Health and Aged Care (DOHAC) on the COVID-19 response. Meetings were an additional channel for the DOHAC to communicate rapidly evolving clinical information during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports from these meetings were provided to the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care and the DOHAC Senior Executive.

The RACP has held membership on the National GP Peak Bodies COVID-19 Group since its inception. Other group members include the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Australian Medical Association (AMA), and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), amongst others. Following the announcement of Professor Kidd's departure from the Department in June 2023, meetings were paused before the group was formally disbanded in October 2023.

Parliamentary Inquiry into Long COVID and repeated COVID infections

Following a referral on 1 September 2022 from the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, it was announced that there would be a Parliamentary Inquiry into long COVID and repeated COVID infections. Member of Parliament (MP), paediatrician and RACP Fellow, Dr Mike Frelander FRACP, was appointed Committee

Chair. Additional MP and RACP Fellows also appointed to the Committee included paediatrician Professor Monique Ryan FRACP, as well as infectious disease physician Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah FRACP.

The Inquiry aimed to draw on the experience and insights of healthcare providers supporting patients with long COVID and/or repeated COVID infections, to better understand the impacts on Australia's health system. Following extensive RACP consultation and CPAC approval, a [RACP submission](#)¹⁰⁵ was provided to the Inquiry in November 2022.

On 24 April 2023, the work of the Inquiry Committee concluded with the release of the report *Sick and tired: Casting a long shadow*¹⁰⁶. The report outlines [nine \(9\) recommendations](#)¹⁰⁷ identified by the Inquiry Committee to address the impact of long COVID and repeated COVID infections, with strong uptake of the recommendations put forward in The RACP [submission](#)¹⁰⁸.

Following the release of the [Inquiry report](#)¹⁰⁹, The RACP was invited by the Victorian Department of Health to appoint a representative to attend the Long COVID conference held on 1 September 2023. The invite-only conference was dedicated to Long COVID and brought together leading researchers, clinicians and policy makers and showcased presentations on clinician and consumer experiences, knowledge and emerging evidence on managing Long COVID care. Professor Steven Faux FAFRM, clinical lead for NSW Health's Rehabilitation Community of Practice in COVID-19 who helped establish one of the first Long COVID clinics in NSW, represented The RACP at the event, providing a post-event brief on key learnings.

105 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission---inquiry-into-long-covid-and-repeated-covid-infections.pdf?sfvrsn=a3b6d11a_8

106 https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportrep/RB000006/toc_pdf/SickandtiredCastingalongshadow.pdf

107 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Health_Aged_Care_and_Sport/LongandrepeatCOVID/Report/Chapter_7_-_Recommendations

108 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission---inquiry-into-long-covid-and-repeated-covid-infections.pdf?sfvrsn=a3b6d11a_8

109 https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportrep/RB000006/toc_pdf/SickandtiredCastingalongshadow.pdf

Improving future preparedness: Inquiry into the response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 21 September 2023, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced an independent Inquiry to be held into Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The announcement follows the [final report of the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 released in April 2022](#)¹¹⁰, which contained seventeen (17) recommendations, including the establishment of a Royal Commission to examine Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to inform preparedness for future COVID-19 waves and future pandemics.

The Inquiry will consider Commonwealth responses to the pandemic, including the provision of vaccinations, treatments and key medical supplies to Australians, mental health support for those impacted by COVID-19 and lockdowns, financial support for individuals and business, and assistance for Australians abroad. The RACP will undertake wide consultation with members to develop a submission to the Inquiry once consultation is open.

Australians are waiting several months to access long COVID clinics. They have outlined the challenges they face at a parliamentary inquiry.



MPs on the parliamentary committee on long COVID have heard from patients and the federal health department during a public hearing in Canberra. Source: AAP / Australian Parliament House

Inquiry into the response to the COVID-19 pandemic – [SBS News](#)¹¹¹

Long COVID Clinics

A media release, developed with the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRM) Policy and Advocacy Committee (PAC) members, was released in October advocating for the Australian Government to consider actions that would support best service delivery and management of patients with long COVID symptoms.

Care and Support

Approaching the health and wellbeing of people and workers in aged care, veterans care, disability care and early childhood education and care sectors holistically highlights the negative impacts of services that are organised separately and siloed. It recognises that services do not operate in ways that reflect current knowledge about social determinants and their impact on health including the value of work to the health and wellbeing of people, and the importance of integrated care and including carers in the provision of publicly supported care services. The RACP provided a [submission](#)¹¹² to Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in July regarding the draft National Care and Support Economy Strategy.

110 https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportsen/024920/toc_pdf/Finalreport.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

111 <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/not-always-fully-recognised-long-covid-patients-speak-at-inquiry-as-national-strategy-considered/mim2xcour>

112 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-draft-national-care-and-support-economy-strategy.pdf?sfvrsn=6d9dd51a_4

Paediatrics and Child Health

Continuing to be a leading voice on child health matters

The RACP continues to work with our members of the Paediatrics and Child Health Division (PCHD) to develop submissions relating to the health and wellbeing of children, in alignment with The RACP [Child Health Advocacy Strategy 2022–2025](#)¹¹³.

In February, The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, attended the National Early Years Summit with a range of stakeholders to inform the development of the Commonwealth [Early Years Strategy](#)¹¹⁴. The Strategy will help the Commonwealth create a more integrated, holistic approach to the early years and better support the education, wellbeing and development of Australia's children. Following this, The RACP provided a [submission](#)¹¹⁵ to the Early Years Strategy Discussion Paper. The RACP submission highlights the need for investment in the early years of children's health, development and wellbeing as the most cost-effective means of tackling long-term health conditions and health inequity, reflecting our recommendations in The RACP position statement [Early Childhood: The Importance of the Early Years](#)¹¹⁶.

In March, The RACP released a [media statement](#)¹¹⁷ calling on the NSW Government to pilot early childhood education for three-year-olds in key communities in the lead up to the NSW State Election. This was followed in August with [another call](#)¹¹⁸ to all States and Territories to provide universal early learning for all three-year-old children, following South Australia committing to universal early learning for three-year-old children.

In April, The RACP [provided a submission](#)¹¹⁹ to the Australian Department of Education review of the impact of COVID-19 on school students with disability. The RACP submission highlights the key areas in which the education and wellbeing of school students with disability were, and continue to be, disproportionately impacted by COVID-related school closures and contains a set of recommendations to address these issues.

In May, The RACP made a submission to the Productivity Commission [Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care](#)¹²⁰. The key recommendation within this submission calls on the Australian Government to implement universal access to quality early childhood education programs for all three-year-olds, in alignment with the recommendation of The RACP [Kids Catch Up](#)¹²¹ campaign.

Also in May, The RACP provided a [submission](#)¹²² to the Senate inquiry into the provision of and access to dental services in Australia, which focused on the experience of children accessing and affording dental and related services. Oral health is an integral component of general health and wellbeing, which is the foundation for long-term health outcomes. However, too many families are unable to access or afford quality dental care. The RACP submission strongly supports the Senate's consideration of interventions that enhance the equity of the dental health sector.

113 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/child-health-advocacy-strategy-2022-25.pdf?sfvrsn=b581c91a_4

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

115 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-early-years-strategy-discussion-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=e069d31a_4

116 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/early-childhood-importance-of-early-years-position-statement.pdf>

117 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/paediatricians-and-physicians-call-for-nsw-to-pilot-early-childhood-education-for-three-year-olds-in-key-communities>

118 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-call-on-all-states-territories-to-provide-universal-early-learning-for-three-year-old-children>

119 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-impact-of-covid-on-school-students-with-disability.pdf?sfvrsn=83e2d31a_8

120 <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/childhood#draft>

121 <https://kidscatchup.org.au/about/>

122 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-senate-inquiry-into-the-provision-of-and-access-to-dental-services-in-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=c20fd21a_6

In June, The RACP provided a [submission](#)¹²³ to the Senate Inquiry into the assessment and support services for people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This submission led to an invitation for The RACP to provide evidence at a public hearing on 29 June, alongside a representative from The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). Paediatrician and ADHD expert Associate Professor Daryl Efron FRACP provided evidence on behalf of The RACP, with [discussions at the hearing](#)¹²⁴ focusing on models of care to support assessment and services and the role of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in supporting people diagnosed with ADHD.

Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services

The [Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services position statement](#)¹²⁵ was launched in June at the 2023 RACP Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable (see the 2023 RACP Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable section below).

The position statement considers current evidence and proposes strategies and recommendations to deliver effective health care to children and young people who are at risk of entering out-of-home care, are in out-of-home care, or are in contact with care and protection services across Australia. Recommendations are directed to the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, as well as providers/workers involved with children and young people, health, care and protection services, across Australia.



HEALTH CARE OF CHILDREN IN CARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES AUSTRALIA

Position statement
JUNE 2023



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Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services Position Statement

123 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-senate-inquiry-into-assessment-and-support-services-for-people-with-adhd.pdf?sfvrsn=fe2ad21a_8

124 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/ADHD

125 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

The RACP acknowledges the hard work and dedication of all involved in the development of the position statement, particularly the working group members:

- Dr Alison Vogel FRACP – Chair
- Dr Maree Crawford FRACP
- Dr Mick Creati FRACP
- Dr Meredith Forsyth FRACP
- MS Elizabeth Harnett – Consumer representative
- Dr Paul Hotton FRACP
- Dr Niroshini Kennedy FRACP
- Dr Clare Malley FRACP
- Dr Karen McLean FRACP
- Mr Gregory Nicolau – Consultant Psychologist
- Professor Graham Vimpani FRACP

To complement the position statement, a [summary document](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/pchd/racp-health-care-of-children-in-care-and-protection-services-australia-summary.pdf?sfvrsn=7081d51a_4)¹²⁶ as well as an overview of the [principles and recommendations](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/pchd/racp-health-care-of-children-in-care-and-protection-services-australia-principles-and-recommendations-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=2a81d51a_4)¹²⁷ have been developed. A plan is in development to support advocacy on the position statement recommendations.



Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services Position Statement Working Group

126 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/pchd/racp-health-care-of-children-in-care-and-protection-services-australia-summary.pdf?sfvrsn=7081d51a_4

127 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/pchd/racp-health-care-of-children-in-care-and-protection-services-australia-principles-and-recommendations-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=2a81d51a_4



RACP Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable

2023 RACP Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable

On 21 June, the 2023 [RACP Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable](#) was held¹²⁸ at Parliament House, Canberra, and co-hosted with the Parliamentary Friends of Child and Adolescent Health and Mental Health – Chairs: Dr Mike Frelander MP, Dr Monique Ryan MP and Dr David Gillespie MP, who are all Fellows of The RACP and were in attendance. A Welcome to Country was provided by Paul Girrawah House.

The event raised awareness across the Federal Parliament of the health and wellbeing of children in care and protection services and youth justice settings and provided a valuable space for stakeholders to discuss ways to improve the health and care for these children, including showcasing best practice models of care. During the event, RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP launched the [Health Care of Children in Care and Protection Services position statement](#)¹²⁹.



Welcome to Country was provided by Paul Girrawah House

The event was well attended by Federal Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, RACP members, key stakeholders and leaders of child health organisations. There were several Members of Parliament who addressed attendees to acknowledge the health and wellbeing issues being discussed and the work needed to implement change, including:

- Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health



Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, President RACP



Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians
- Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, Member for Lingiari
- Mrs Melissa McIntosh MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Other attendees included: Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP FRACP, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Dr Gordon Reid MP, Mr Tony Zappia MP, Mr Gavin Pearce MP, Dr Katie Allen, former MP, Ms Kate Chaney MP, Ms Kylea Tink MP, Staffer for Ms Rebekha Sharkie MP, Staffer for Senator David Shoebridge and Staffer for Senator Jordan Steele-John.

128 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-convene-roundtable-calling-for-urgent-resourcing-of-health-care-for-children-in-care-and-protection-services>

129 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



Recommendations discussed at the event included:

- Investment in full implementation of the Safe and Supported National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–31 and the National Clinical Assessment Framework. With focused attention on ensuring:
 - Funding a comprehensive health assessment and health management plan for each young person entering or involved with care and protection services.
 - Investing in specialised multidisciplinary services to deliver integrated primary health, specialist, and mental health care.
 - Specific Medicare item numbers for initial comprehensive and follow-up health assessments delivered by health care workers for children and young people in care and protection services.
- Investment in evidence informed prevention, early intervention, support programs and best practice models of health care as alternatives, to reduce the number of children and carer/s involved with care and protection services and the risk of statutory intervention.
- Achieving Target 12 under Closing the Gap, which aims to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031.
- Appointing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner roles in each jurisdiction.

- Calling for national leadership on raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age and acting on the findings of the Council of Attorneys General Draft 2020 Report.

Dr Monique Ryan MP facilitated a panel discussion focused on the topic of the health and wellbeing of children involved with care and protection services and youth justice settings. Panel members included: Professor Ngiare Brown GP and Medical Director of Djanaba Wellbeing, Chair of the National Mental Health Commission, and Chancellor of James Cook University; Professor Jonathan Carapetis FRACP, paediatrician; Ms Elizabeth Harnett, CEO of the Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare; Professor Sharon Goldfeld FRACP, paediatrician, and Professor Frank Oberklaid FRACP, paediatrician.

The first roundtable session focused on innovative models of care and presentations included: Dr Niroshini Kennedy FRACP, paediatrician; Tracey Brand and Dr Kim Isaac, CEO and General Practitioner from Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service in Western Australia, and Dr Karen McLean FRACP, paediatrician. The second roundtable session explored systemic issues and advocacy and included presentations from Dr Paul Hotton FRACP, paediatrician, who presented on Stronger Families: Breaking the intergenerational cycle, and Dr Elizabeth Elliott FRACP, paediatrician, who shared her knowledge of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD).

A report of the event will be published and provided to key stakeholders in coming months with a request for further conversations.



L-R: Ms Jill Gallagher OA VACCHO, Ms Donna Burns AIDA, Ms Tracey Brand Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, Mr Lee Bradfield RACP, The Hon Marion Scrymgour MP, Dr Kim Isaac Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, Prof Ngiare Brown Chair of the RACP ATSIHC



Panel members L-R: Professor Frank Oberklaid FRACP, Professor Sharon Goldfeld FRACP, Ms Elizabeth Harnett, Professor Ngiare Brown, Professor Jonathan Carapetis FRACP

Adolescents and Young Adults

A new working group, under the auspice of The RACP Adolescents and Young Adults Medicine Committee and the PCHD, is developing a position statement on Youth Appropriate Health Care to improve the health care experience of young people. The position statement work aims to:

- Describe health services that are appropriate for young people and improves their health and wellbeing.
- Advocate for changes in hospital health services to improve young people's experiences with health services.
- Encourage systems, processes and structures that focus on the needs of young people.

A Youth Advisory Group is being established to incorporate the voice of young people in the development of the position statement. The Youth Advisory Group will provide feedback to the working group on how doctors and health services can provide appropriate health care to young people and how the aspirations, needs and concerns of young people can best be supported within healthcare.

Sexual Health Medicine

The Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine (AChSHM) continues to provide impactful policy contributions and maintains cross sector partnerships to progress advocacy goals and respond to emerging issues for sexual health.

MPox

Following the Australian Federal Government's [statement](#)¹³⁰ declaring MPox a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance (CDINS) in July 2022 and the continuing health issue, the National Clinical Evidence Taskforce was prompted to expand their scope to include MPox in addition to their work on COVID-19. Dr Vincent Cornelisse FACHSHM was formally appointed as AChSHM representative to assist in the review of updated recommendations.

In November 2022, the Australian Federal Government stood down Australia's CDINS declaration for MPox. In May 2023, to reflect the national and international health and research landscapes and the limited cases of MPox in Australia, the Taskforce made the decision to retire the [MPX Living Guidelines](#)¹³¹.

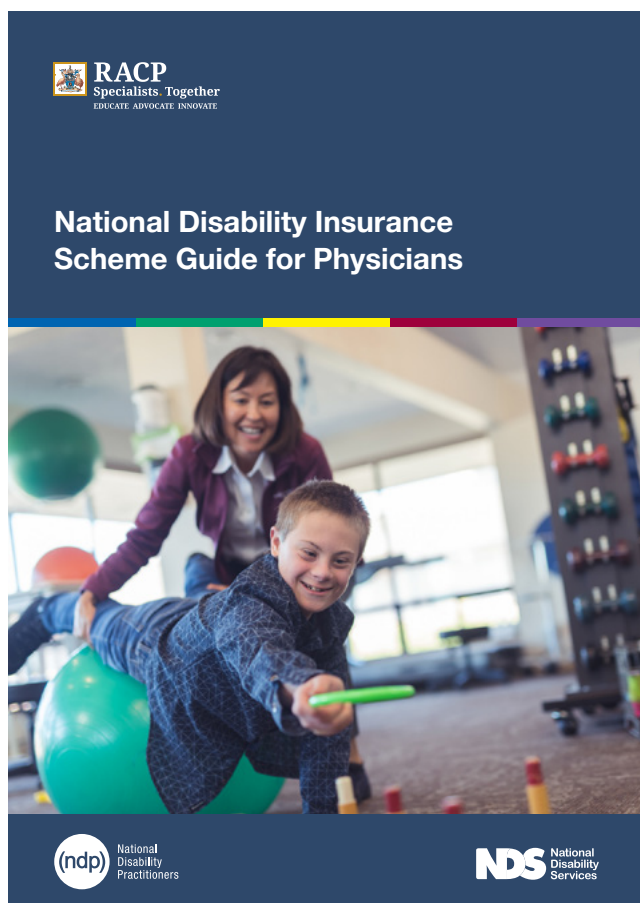
Pregnancy and postnatal care

In May 2023, it was announced that in partnership with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) and the Advisory Committee on Medicines (ACM), the National Clinical Evidence Taskforce had received five (5) years of funding to develop and maintain the Living Evidence for Australian Pregnancy and Postnatal care (LEAPP) guidelines. Dr Stephanie Bond FACHSHM, was formally appointed as the AChSHM representative to participate on the LEAPP Guidelines review committee. AChSHM involvement in the development of the LEAPP Guidelines presents an opportunity to highlight the urgent action needed to tackle the increasing rates of syphilis infection in pregnant women and the concerning rise of congenital syphilis cases in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

130 <https://www.health.gov.au/news/chief-medical-officers-statement-declaring-monkeypox-a-communicable-disease-incident-of-national-significance>
131 <https://clinicalevidence.net.au/mpx/#mpx-guidelines>

Disability

The RACP Disability Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (PAAG) continued work on the new RACP NDIS Guide for Physicians this year, via a commission with the National Disability Services (NDS). The new NDIS Guide for Physicians¹³² was published in September. The updated Guide now includes more Indigenous and culturally safe content, and it continues to be RACP's foremost tool for upskilling and educating RACP members on the NDIS, and how to support and advocate for their patients with disability.



National Disability Insurance Scheme Guide for Physicians

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability handed down its final report¹³³ at the end of September. The Royal Commission has made 222 recommendations on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The RACP are reviewing these recommendations for alignment with the recommendations from The RACP submission to the Royal Commission¹³⁴ and to determine next steps for opportunities and advocacy activities.

There has been a lot of attention this year regarding the NDIS, including in May following the Federal Government announcement regarding reducing the NDIS growth expenditure in coming years. The RACP continues to keep a close relationship with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), with regular meetings and engagement regarding the Information Gathering for Access and Planning (IGAP) project and a new Professional Advice Pool that is being established to support guidance for improving NDIS processes. Following a meeting in the first quarter of the year with RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, Professor Graeme Maguire FRACP, Dr Jennifer Mann FAFRM, Dr Paul Hotton FRACP, Dr Robert Leitner FRACP, and Dr Stephanie Lam FAFRM, with the NDIS Review team, we await recommendations from the Australian Government NDIS Review, which is due to be finalised this year.

Disability-related RACP submissions this year have included to the Department of Health and Aged Care Draft Intellectual Disability Health Core Capabilities and to the Department of Social Services' consultation on new Act to replace the Disability Services Act 1986, as well The RACP Submission Impact of COVID on school students with disability¹³⁵.

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

133 <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

134 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-royal-commission-into-violence-abuse-neglect-and-exploitation-of-people-with-disability.pdf?sfvrsn=34efff1a_4

135 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-impact-of-covid-on-school-students-with-disability.pdf?sfvrsn=83e2d31a_8

Rehabilitation

Bariatric Rehabilitation

The [Bariatric Rehabilitation position statement](#)¹³⁶ was launched in May with over 100 people registered for the virtual launch event. The statement has been distributed widely to stakeholders with a recording of the launch event. A short survey was also distributed for recipients to respond to a handful of short questions to inform implementation of the position statement recommendations into practice. This statement will be distributed in Aotearoa New Zealand at a meeting of Rehabilitation Medicine specialists at Middlemore Hospital in November.



BARIATRIC REHABILITATION

Position statement
2023



Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)
145 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia – Email: policy@racp.edu.au

RACP AFRM Bariatric Rehabilitation Position Statement 2023

The position statement identifies models of care that demonstrate some solutions to these problems and addresses four key areas to improve rehabilitation care for patients with bariatric needs:

1. Service planning, staffing, training, resources and infrastructure.
2. Rehabilitation assessment and management of patients with bariatric needs.
3. Obesity assessment and weight management in patients with bariatric needs and weight-related complications.
4. Potential collaboration between rehabilitation medicine and weight management services in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our thanks to the Bariatric Rehabilitation Working Group:

- Dr Peter Sturgess, FAFRM – Chair
- Dr Dawn Adair, FAFRM
- Dr Shirley Alexander, FRACP
- Dr Peter Anastassiadis, FAFRM, FRACP
- Dr David Eckerman, FAFRM
- Dr Leslie Gan, FAFRM
- Dr Nidhi Gupta, FAFRM
- Dr George Hopkins (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons representative)
- Dr Chiaki Kojima FAFRM (Trainee representative)
- Dr Baheerathan Narayanan FAFRM (Trainee representative)
- Dr Mary-Clare Waugh, FAFRM, FRACP
- Dr Sharon Wong, FAFRM

136 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/afrm-bariatric-rehabilitation-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=408bd21a_8

Long COVID Clinics

A media release, developed with the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRM) Policy and Advocacy Committee (PAC) members, was released in October advocating for the Australian Government to consider actions that would support best service delivery and management of patients with long COVID symptoms.

Palliative medicine

The RACP have been working with a small group of paediatric palliative medicine physicians to determine plans regarding the existing RACP Decision-Making at the End of Life in Infants, Children and Adolescents position statement. The small group is debating revision plans versus the need for a different document. Once determined, this work will be led by the Australasian Chapter of Palliative Medicine (AChPM), in collaboration with the PCHD.

The RACP supported a meeting of AChPM with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) regarding their new Palliative Care Pharmacist Training, which successfully received a grant as part of the Federal Government announcement in May regarding a \$68million palliative care grants package. The PSA Palliative Care Pharmacist Foundation Training program will aim to:

- Be available to all Australian registered pharmacists.
- Upskill pharmacists and improve their capacity to provide palliative care.
- Be co-designed with subject matter experts, partner organisations and consumers.
- Pilot a community palliative care pharmacist service model with specialist pharmacists who have upskilled.

Addiction medicine

In July last year, The RACP President, Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP and the President of The RACP's Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM), Professor Adrian Dunlop FACHAM, wrote to the Federal Health Minister, The Hon Mark Butler, to request he exercise Ministerial Discretion in relation to Statutory Price Reductions (SPRs) to guarantee ongoing availability of essential PBS listed medicines used in the Opiate Dependence Treatment Program (ODTP) in Australia. These SPRs were due to come into effect in April 2023 and there were significant concerns that they could impact on the availability of these essential medications in Australia. The Minister wrote back to The RACP indicating that "there is no intention for the reforms to have an adverse outcome on patient access to important treatments." Since then, we have been made aware that the planned SPRs were much less than anticipated, thereby ensuring their continued availability to Australian patients.

In addition, the Commonwealth Government has implemented changes to make medications on the ODTP more affordable to PBS-eligible patients since July 2023.¹³⁷ These changes resulted from the Post-Market Review of Opioid Dependence Treatment to which AChAM contributed two submissions¹³⁸ calling on the Commonwealth Government to ensure that the cost of opioid treatment to the patient does not remain a barrier to participating in this treatment.

The RACP submitted¹³⁹ to Pharmac in Aotearoa New Zealand regarding a November 2022 amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations¹⁴⁰ which loosened opioid drug access, allowing for access to three months' worth of certain pain medications at once, up from one months' worth. The RACP advised relaxing the restrictions for palliative care rated pain but strongly advised keeping them for other opiate use. The Government has heard our calls and reinstated the 1-month maximum prescription for opioids, which came into effect on 5 October.

¹³⁷ Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) | Opioid Dependence Treatment Program

¹³⁸ <https://www.racp.edu.au/advocacy/division-faculty-and-chapter-priorities/chapter-of-addiction-medicine>

¹³⁹ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/pa-racp-submission-to-pharmac-proposal-to-amend-pharmaceutical-schedule-rules-on-prescribing-dispensing-class-b-controlled-drugs.pdf?sfvrsn=d4e9d11a_6

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2022/0303/latest/LMS784021.html>

Illicit drugs

In January, the AChAM led the [College's submission to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's illicit drug problem – Challenges and opportunities for law enforcement](#)¹⁴¹ which stressed the crucial importance of prioritising a health approach to drug use to effectively reduce harms for those who use drugs, their families and the community.

The Joint Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHM)/AChAM Drug Policy Working Group continues its work on developing a position statement that sets out a new health-focused approach to illicit drug policy, including preventative and harm reduction measures, evidence-based treatment services and regulatory options to support reduced harm from substance use. The revised position statement will be subject to consultation with internal and external stakeholders in 2024 before approval and publication.

Problem Gambling

The work of the Problem Gambling Working Group which is led by the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) and comprises AChAM members is progressing. In February 2023, Professor John Saunders, AChAM President-Elect, represented The RACP at a public hearing of the [House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm](#)¹⁴². This opportunity arose following the [joint RANZCP/RACP submission to the inquiry in late 2022](#)¹⁴³.

Smoking harm

In Aotearoa New Zealand, The RACP supported proposals to reduce smoking and smoking harm in its [submission](#)¹⁴⁴ to the Ministry of Health on the Smoked Tobacco Regulatory Regime. Proposals include preventing people born 2009-onwards from ever purchasing smoked tobacco products, reducing the number of smoked tobacco product retailers from 6000 to approx. 600, lowering nicotine levels in smoked tobacco products and adding some regulations around vaping products. The RACP criticized the absence of vaping products in these regulations as evidence of vaping harm is growing, especially in young people, and The RACP advised that vaping is included in the regulations being applied to smoked tobacco products in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In early 2023, The RACP made a [submission](#)¹⁴⁵ to the TGA's consultation on the proposed regulation of nicotine vaping products (NVPs) in Australia in four domains: changes to border controls for NVPs, pre-market TGA assessment of NVPs, minimum quality and safety standards for NVPs, and clarification of the status of NVPs as 'therapeutic goods'. This resulted in Minister Butler's announcement in May to introduce a comprehensive range of vaping reforms.

141 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission_aust-parliament-illicit-drug-inquiry.pdf?sfvrsn=653ad11a_4

142 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts

143 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/joint-ranzcp-racp-submission---australian-parliamentary-inquiry-into-online-gambling-and-its-impacts-on-those-experiencing-gambling-harm.pdf?sfvrsn=dfb0d11a_4

144 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-ministry-of-health-on-the-proposals-for-the-smoked-tobacco-regulatory-regime.pdf?sfvrsn=9246d01a_4

145 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission_tga-proposed-reforms-to-nvp-regulation.pdf?sfvrsn=53c8d01a_8

Alcohol related harms

The RACP works to increase awareness of alcohol related harms, the impact of alcohol on local health systems and priority populations, as well as evidence-based approaches to harm reduction.

In early 2023, First Nations Fellows and Trainees were engaged to inform a RACP response to alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory, resulting in a [media release](#)¹⁴⁶ and [submission](#)¹⁴⁷ that brought attention to the urgent need for additional community programs to combat the social determinants of alcohol consumption.

Through 2023, social media work has continued to call for Minimum Unit Pricing in partnership with the WA Cancer Council which has assembled a coalition of partners calling for Minimum Unit Pricing to curb the high rates of alcohol related injuries and violence in Western Australia. The RACP Minimum Unit Pricing easy read [resource](#)¹⁴⁸ has been promoted to Western Australia's decision makers as part of this combined advocacy.

The RACP supported proposals in the Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Community Participation) Bill in its [submission](#)¹⁴⁹ to the Justice Committee in Aotearoa New Zealand. These proposals can be seen as strengthening democracy through increasing communities' opportunity and voice around the availability and proliferation of alcohol outlets, protecting their whānau from the multiple adverse impacts of alcohol.

A month-long social media campaign 'Red Shoes Rock' was launched on RACP channels in the lead up to international NOFASD awareness day on September 9, 2023, to heighten awareness of the importance of early practitioner conversations with women considering pregnancy or in conception, in coordination with RACP partner Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Australia.



Red Shoes Rock social media campaign

146 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-support-reinstatement-of-nt-alcohol-restrictions-but-more-community-programs-needed-to-support-this>

147 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-feedback-to-the-nt-alcohol-action-plan-2023-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=6c7d31a_8

148 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/policy-and-adv/alcohol/racp-factsheet-on-minimum-unit-pricing-on-alcohol.pdf?sfvrsn=d4f8f71a_10#:~:text=Minimum%20unit%20pricing%20reduces%20health,standard%20alcoholic%20drinks%20a%20day

149 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-to-the-justice-committee-on-the-sale-and-supply-of-alcohol-community-participation-bill.pdf?sfvrsn=15f7d01a_4

Occupational and Environmental Medicine

Occupational respiratory diseases, including accelerated silicosis

A core group of Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) physicians, with members from the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ), Australia and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) have continued dedicated advocacy over 2023 targeting action on Australian Government agreed recommendations of the National Dust Diseases Taskforce. Concurrently, The RACP has also been strategically priming Aotearoa New Zealand for similar workplace action as claims are being lodged.

In 2023 advocacy actions have urged:

- The establishment of the National Occupational Respiratory Diseases Registry (NORDR), which is of foundational importance. Advocacy has reiterated recommendations for its essential provisions in submissions, stakeholder meetings and public statements, such as the [joint RACP-AFOEM and TSANZ submission](#)¹⁵⁰ to the Inquiry into the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Bill 2023 and the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023.
- Development of a National prevention strategy, via the [joint AFOEM, TSANZ and ANZSOM submission](#)¹⁵¹ on National Silicosis Prevention Strategy 2023–2028 and National Action Plan.
- The Standing Council of Work Health and Safety (WHS) Ministers to introduce a strong regulatory framework and a national respiratory protection program across all States and Territories, in addition to the NORDR. This involved The RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP, and AFOEM President Dr Warren Harrex FAFOEM, FAFPHM, writing to the February meeting of the WHS Ministers.
- Regulation of the use of engineered stone in a [joint AFOEM, TSANZ and ANZSOM submission](#)¹⁵² to SafeWork Australia consultation on a prohibition ban on the use of engineered stone.
- Take up of RACP recommendations by stakeholder organisations through meetings with SafeWork Australia, the Department of Health and Aged Care, and Lung Foundation Australia. Accordingly, Dr Graeme Edwards FAFOEM, was appointed as RACP representative on the Occupational Lung Diseases Network Steering Committee, Lung Foundation Australia.
- WorkSafe NZ to be proactive on accelerated silicosis. Dr Alexandra Muthu FAFOEM has promoted the engagement of occupational and environmental medicine physician expertise in workplace prevention strategies and for prevention strategies to be considered by Worksafe NZ, such as health screening.



7 News interview with Dr Graeme Edwards FRACP

150 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/submission-to-the-inquiry-into-the-national-occupational-respiratory-disease-registry-bill-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=5e4ad41a_4

151 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-national-silicosis-prevention-strategy-2023-2028.pdf?sfvrsn=e4e2d31a_4

152 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-joint-afodem-tsanz-and-anzsom-submission-safe-work-australia-consultation-on-a-prohibition-ban-on-the-use-of-engineered-stone.pdf?sfvrsn=920ed31a_4

There have been numerous opportunities for our RACP member expert recommendations to be reinforced regarding eradicating this preventable severe workplace health issue, with RACP spokesperson, Dr Graeme Edwards FAFOEM, AFOEM President Dr Warren Harrex FAFOEM, AFPHM, and AoNZ spokesperson, Dr Alexandra Muthu FAFOEM, in television and radio interviews and news features: [RACP says respiratory protection program must be on agenda to prevent further silicosis deaths](#)¹⁵³ (27 February 2023), [‘Accelerated silicosis the tip of the iceberg.’ – Physicians call for national approach to protect workers](#)¹⁵⁴ (20 February 2023), [Unions call on Albanese to enact immediate ban on engineered stone](#)¹⁵⁵ The Age, 20 February 2023, [Unions heap pressure over ‘asbestosis of the 2020s’](#)¹⁵⁶ The West Australian, 21 February 2023, [Calls to ban silica stone](#)¹⁵⁷ The Saturday Paper 21 February 2023, [7 News interview](#)¹⁵⁸ with Dr Graeme Edwards FRACP 27 February 2023, [‘It’s no change’: Frustration as ministers defer decision on banning deadly stone](#)¹⁵⁹ The Sydney Morning Herald, 28 February 2023, [5AA Adelaide interview](#)¹⁶⁰ with Dr Graeme Edwards FRACP, 28 February 2023, FIVEaa [Engineered stone: Federal government under pressure to release Safe Work’s ban report \(smh.com.au\)](#)¹⁶¹ featuring Dr Graeme Edwards FRACP, 11 September 2023, Sydney Morning Herald.

Improving the health of health care workers

Healthcare workers in public hospitals are the focus of new AFOEM-led work to drive improvements in the workplace. Two working groups are developing documents to support reforms needed:

1. A guidance document to advocate for improvement in WHS in the healthcare sector.
2. A position paper on the value of occupational and environmental medicine physicians in the healthcare sector.

Fitness to drive

Each year there are changes to State and Territory medical assessment processes relating to fitness to drive commercial vehicles. In 2023 RACP members addressed a draft exposure bill for an ACT framework for mandatory medical reporting.

153 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/racp-says-respiratory-protection-program-must-be-on-agenda-to-prevent-further-silicosis-deaths>

154 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/accelerated-silicosis-the-tip-of-the-iceberg---physicians-call-for-national-approach-to-protect-workers>

155 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/unions-call-on-albanese-to-enact-immediate-ban-on-engineered-stone-20230220-p5c1t5.html>

156 https://www.pilbaranews.com.au/news/health/fresh-push-to-ban-asbestos-of-the-2020s-c-9807404?utm_source=csp&utm_medium=portal&utm_campaign=Stream&token=WY6GHderAkfxD3d8Zf72FyVt4ZCQB.JNN%2EPNrSMHrxDNZzao3F0hj%2FNRhPxb0LIh%2Et721saq00B%2Fe2dlyKzQow%3D%3D

157 <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/post/max-opray/2023/02/21/calls-ban-silica-stone?cspt=1677647848%7CFd5315cdb8bfa71b17839373b3f30beb>

158 <https://app.box.com/s/eae5bsznzhfifj3606e8x6badgmlfq>

159 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/states-and-territories-agree-to-ban-engineered-stone-20230228-p5co5m.html>

160 <https://app.box.com/s/qq5l4kanoupr2i5dys36lxcfgbdfusr>

161 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/states-and-territories-agree-to-ban-engineered-stone-20230228-p5co5m.html>

Aged Care

As the Australian Government continues to work through the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, The RACP provides specialist input where this can have greatest effect. Our strategies are to draw on the specialties that provide services to older people across the different health care sectors, to work closely with the Australia and New Zealand Society of Geriatric Medicine (ANZSGM) and to draw on the views and experience of our newly established Aged Care Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (PAAG) members.

Significant RACP submissions over 2023 have included: [submission](#)¹⁶² addressing the new Aged Care Act: the foundations, [submission](#)¹⁶³ to the Department of Health and Aged Care National Dementia Action Plan 2023 – 2033.

Aged care is also addressed through State and Territory initiatives and The RACP has appointed geriatrician Dr Khin Thu FRACP, to the NSW Nursing and Midwifery Association Aged Care Roundtable, a forum of organisations focuses on improving the provision of care in aged care facilities.

Veteran Health

Members from across The RACP provided insightful commentary that formed The [RACP submission](#)¹⁶⁴ to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. This submission describes for the Royal Commission: major healthcare needs; how ideal health care is either confounded or not easily accessible, and the systemic areas that can change. The submission also highlights that broader cultural shifts could be achieved by:

- Greater attention to the organisational and systemic factors throughout training which can predispose injured Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel to develop subsequent psychological and psychiatric issues following physical, psychological and/or sexual injury.
- Greater retention and continued employment of injured ADF personnel with transferable skills, rather than moving down the medical discharge route if the person is no longer fully deployable. Early quality access to comprehensive medical and vocational rehabilitation is essential.

¹⁶² https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/submission-to-a-new-aged-care-act-the-foundations.pdf?sfvrsn=706fd71a_4

¹⁶³ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-feedback-national-dementia-action-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=ff94d01a_4

¹⁶⁴ 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



Aotearoa New Zealand

In addition to the work that Aotearoa policy and advocacy have done across the policy areas outlined earlier in this report, there has been some Aotearoa specific additional work on campaigns.

#MakeItTheNorm

Aotearoa New Zealand RACP continue to deliver against #MakeItTheNorm with The RACP endorsing Child Poverty Action Group's three key election asks: free preschool education for every child; a warm, safe dry house for every child and good food for every child in Aotearoa New Zealand and releasing a [media statement](#)¹⁶⁵ to advance efforts to make health equity the norm.



RACP AoNZ election campaign #HealHealthcare

Aotearoa NZ Election Campaign

The RACP plays an active role in election campaigns by advocating for policies that enable their patients to live longer, healthier lives. In the lead up to the 2023 election in Aotearoa New Zealand, The RACP called on the government to [#HealHealthcare](#)¹⁶⁶, and commit to ensuring our health workforce is planned, trained, and retained. The focus of this campaign was determined by RACP member engagement via a survey in March, stakeholder engagement (Ministry of Health and Association of Salaried Medical Specialists), as well as several committee meetings (Maori Health Committee, Aotearoa NZ Committee, and Aotearoa NZ Policy and Advocacy Committee).

Advice was also sought from government relations firm, Capital, in April. The election statement set out four priority policy areas for action to support our health workforce and heal our health system:

1. Data-driven and evidence-informed health workforce planning
2. Grow the medical workforce to reflect the diversity of the population
3. Address barriers to accessing Telehealth
4. Prevent burnout to retain workforce and improve patient outcomes.

In line with the priorities of The RACP [Indigenous Strategic Framework](#)¹⁶⁷, the statement calls for more funding into training pathways and support programmes that specifically cater to Māori and Pasifika students, as well as culturally safe working environments with Māori-specific support for our health workers to prevent burnout.

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/innovations-in-health-must-work-to-reduce-health-inequities-says-racp>

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.racp.edu.au/advocacy/the-2023-aotearoa-new-zealand-election>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.racp.edu.au/about/board-and-governance/governance-documents/indigenous-strategic-framework-2018-2028>

State and Territory advocacy

Northern Territory

A RACP submission was prepared in response to the [Draft Northern Territory Alcohol Action Plan](#)¹⁷⁵. The submission highlights the need to address the social determinants of health and health inequalities, cultural safety and the importance of ensuring actions are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the need to address the impacts of alcohol advertising and work with other jurisdictions on a nationally coordinated approach and the need to focus on harm minimisation and outline how services will meet the needs of the population.

In response to concerns about the increase of alcohol-related violence in Alice Springs, The RACP released a [media statement supporting the re-instatement of alcohol restrictions in the Northern Territory](#)¹⁷⁶. In the media statement, The RACP focused on the importance of self-determination and the need for governments to co-operate with First Nations people to gain a full understanding of the Alice Springs community's priorities.



RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small FRACP NT visit

The RACP President, Dr Jaqueline Small FRACP, visited the Northern Territory in June. A meeting was organised with the NT Health Chief Executive and the Chief Minister's Health advisor to discuss RACP advocacy priorities including youth justice and raising the age of criminal responsibility, alcohol harm minimisation and improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and access to medical specialists. Visits were also organised with Professor Reuben Bolt, Deputy Vice Chancellor First Nations Leadership, Charles Darwin University; Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Purple House.

The Northern Territory Committee drafted a letter to the Chief Minister congratulating her Government on being the first state/territory to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years and underscoring The RACP's position that the minimum age is 14 years.

The NT Committee participated in the Northern Territory government's consultation on the proposed introduction of Voluntary Assisted Dying.

South Australia

The RACP provided individual member feedback on the South Australian *Draft Veteran Wellbeing Action Plan* and continued engagement with the Health Minister and SA Health. This has been led by the SA Trainees' Committee with a focus on physician wellbeing, workload, and protected time for teaching and learning at the SA Women's and Children's Hospital.

175 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-feedback-to-the-nt-alcohol-action-plan-2023-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=6c7d31a_4

176 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/physicians-support-reinstatement-of-nt-alcohol-restrictions-but-more-community-programs-needed-to-support-this>

Western Australia

The RACP has met with Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) about the detainment of young people at Casuarina prison, a maximum-security prison for adult males in WA. This came after senior paediatric physicians from WA expressed their concerns to The RACP.

A joint letter to the WA Premier the Hon Roger Cook, was sent to be co-signed by The RACP President, CEO, Derbarl Yerrigan AMS, The RACP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee Chair, RACP WA Regional Committee Chair and the Chair of The RACP Paediatrics and Child Health Division's (PCHD) P&A Committee.

The letter outlined concerns about the detainment of young people in Casuarina Prison – a correctional facility for adults. A meeting was held on 5 September 2023 with the Minister of Corrective Services regarding Casuarina Prison and raising the age of criminal responsibility. Derbarl Yerrigan attended along with a WA paediatrician and the PCHD President.

The Chair of the WA Committee attended a [WA Health Workforce Summit](#)¹⁷⁷ on 7 August 2023 hosted by the WA Minister for Health.

NSW/ACT

The NSW Committee sent a letter to the new Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health, the Hon. Ryan Park, MP to congratulate them on their new position and to request a meeting. The NSW/ACT Committee has a meeting planned with the NSW Health Minister to discuss accreditation, wellbeing, training, and other NSW Committee priorities.

The NSW/ACT Committee is engaging with the clinical leads for Voluntary Assisted Dying, due to come into effect in NSW in November 2023.

The RACP President gave evidence in June to the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Justice and Safety's Inquiry into Justice (Age of Criminal Responsibility) Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

The Committee prepared a submission to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding in New South Wales.

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook-Labor-Government/Summit-to-drive-solutions-to-bolster-WA%27s-healthcare-workforce-20230807>

¹⁷⁸ https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-nsw-election-statement-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=3f63d01a_4

NSW pre-election statement

The RACP published a [pre-election statement](#)¹⁷⁸ in the lead up to the NSW State Election on 25 March 2023. The election statement features a range of asks including:

- Supporting the specialist workforce to meet growing healthcare needs
- Fostering a culture of wellbeing for physicians and trainee physicians
- Delivering appropriate and sustainable Urgent Care Clinics
- Creating a climate-ready and climate-friendly healthcare system (Healthy Climate Future campaign)
- Supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people to recover from the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years
- Reducing harm by responding to drug use as a health issue.

In response, the new ALP Government has committed to:

- building new preschools as part of a commitment to “universal preschool for four-year-olds before 2030”.
- funding an additional 250 school counsellors as a mental health promotion measure.
- long-term structural reform to the healthcare system by introducing minimum and enforceable Safe Staffing Levels to public hospitals, starting with emergency departments and then progressively out into other areas.
- convening a drug summit in its first term to bring together health and medical experts, police, drug user organisations, families, and other stakeholders to build consensus on the way NSW deals with drug misuse.

Victoria

Ahead of the November 2022 Victorian Election, state-level campaign asks were developed with the Victorian Regional Committee. The [Healthy Climate Future campaign](#)¹⁷⁹ asks were also adapted for the Victorian State election and advocated for. The Committee Chair met with senior public servants in Victoria, including the Chief Health Officer, regarding these asks and other matters in the Victorian Election Statement. Members of the Paediatric and Child Health Division who work in Victoria were surveyed to seek their views on the Kids COVID Catch Up Victorian policy asks and explore how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their work and their patients. Online platforms to support members to take advocacy action by emailing political leaders in Victoria were developed. The actions were promoted across member communications platforms.

In February 2023, the Victorian Government announced that it would bring legislation before the Parliament to address youth justice, child protection and bail reforms in the state. Premier Andrews gave a strong indication that his government is intent on raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years, stating that ‘[Victoria was prepared to abandon the national process, and go it alone](#)’¹⁸⁰.

The RACP wrote to the Victorian government asking to reconsider the plan to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility via a staged approach (to 12 years by 2024 and then to 14 years by 2027) with exceptions and carve outs for serious offences.

¹⁷⁹ <https://healthyclimatefuture.org.au/>

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/16/daniel-andrews-threatens-to-go-it-alone-to-raise-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility-in-victoria>

Queensland

The RACP has sent a letter to the Queensland Government expressing concern about the new laws which are likely to increase the number of children and young people in detention. These laws will adversely affect the health and wellbeing of young people in contact with the youth justice system, and that they will disproportionately impact First Nations young people and their communities.

The Chair and selected members of the Queensland Committee met with Mr Michael Berkman MP, of the Queensland Greens Party, to discuss raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years, advise on The RACP's climate change and health policy work, and to build an ongoing, effective relationship with the MP.

Tracey Handley, QLD Senior Executive Officer, and Samuel Dettmann, Senior Policy Officer, met with the QLD Health Minister's senior policy advisor to secure a ministerial meeting for the QLD Chair to raise concerns about workforce and wellbeing.

Advocacy is underway to follow up on implementation of the recommendations following identified failures in clinical care at Bamaga Hospital, coordinated with the QLD Committee, ATSIHC Chair, PCHD President, and RACP President.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Committee provided a submission to the Tasmanian Department of Health on their [Draft Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040](#),¹⁸¹ with several of recommendations reflected in the final plan. The Tasmanian Committee is engaging with the Tasmanian Government on workforce, training sustainability, and related areas identified in its [submission](#)¹⁸² to the Tasmanian Long Term Health Plan. Subsequent [media](#)¹⁸³ focussed on training more specialists for rural and regional areas.

The AIDA Conference will be held on Nipaluna Country (Hobart) in November 2023 with RACP First Nations members attending and support from The RACP.

181 <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/publications/long-term-plan-healthcare-tasmania-2040>

182 https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-submission-on-the-long-term-plan-for-healthcare-in-tasmania-2040.pdf?sfvrsn=cbc3d21a_4

183 <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/college-says-solution-to-specialist-shortage-must-start-with-training-more-specialists-for-rural-and-regional-areas>



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