

POLICY & ADVOCACY REPORT

October to December 2023

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of over 20,000 physicians and almost 10,000 trainee physicians, across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The RACP represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, infectious diseases medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine, and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients and the community.

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We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians and Elders – past, present and emerging – of the lands and waters on which RACP members and staff live, learn and work. The RACP acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Highlights

- **Climate and health** - extensive feedback provided on draft actions, workforce and training for the [National Health and Climate Strategy](#)
- **First Nations** - sponsoring Australian Indigenous Doctors Association annual conference, presenting on RACP Deadly Doctors Network and self-determination. The RACP sent 4 Members and Drs Elkie Hull and Scott Jones received their AIDA Fellowship.
- **Telehealth** - advocating for fit-for-purpose telehealth arrangements through an RACP [submission](#) to the Medicare review of telehealth items, supported by a meeting with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and related [media](#).
- **Integrated care** - at the 3rd Asia Pacific Conference on Integrated Care, the Australian Health Care Reform Working Group Co-Chairs, Dr Tony Mylius and Ms Debra Letica, delivered a community engagement workshop with Dr Viktoria Stein, co-editor in Chief of the International Journal of Integrated Care.
- **Child and adolescent health**
 - the RACP [submission](#) to the Parliament of Australia Senate 'Assessment and support services for people with ADHD' Inquiry featured significantly in the [Inquiry report](#).
 - the RACP [2023 Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable Report](#) published.
- **Worker health / silicosis**
 - Passing of legislation in Australia to establish a National Occupational Respiratory Diseases Registry (the result of sustained RACP advocacy).
 - Banning of the use of engineered stone in Australia, consistent with RACP submissions, and RACP members were featured strongly in subsequent media.
- **Aged care** - a significant number of RACP recommendations included in the final draft of the [Aged Care Quality Standards and Glossary](#).
- **Raise the Age** - Tasmanian Government committed to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years, without exception, in line with RACP calls.
- **Policy & Advocacy Annual Report 2023** (Oct 2022-Dec 2023) highlights a huge range of activities from the College Policy and Advocacy Council (CPAC), member groups and the P&A Team.
- **Media** - it was a big quarter for media, see Media and Advocacy following for media releases and media coverage.

Advocacy campaign updates

- The [Healthy Climate Future campaign](#) petition updated based on the RACP's [joint statement](#) with 12 other medical colleges. P&A is working with these colleges to promote and grow the campaign. 10 specialty societies have now endorsed the campaign.
- The [Switch off the Junk campaign petition](#) calling for the Australian Government to regulate junk food advertising to children received 864 signatures.

CPAC Plan Focus Areas

1 First Nations Health and Equity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee (ATSIHC) held a combined meeting with the RACP Board and Māori Health Committee.
- ATSIHC Chair Professor Ngiare Brown has resigned from the ATSIHC - the RACP Board will appoint a new Chair in 2024.
- ATSIHC successfully delivered its 2021-2023 workplan.

Indigenous Strategic Framework Steering Committee

- Departments across the College continue to deliver initiatives aligned with the strategic priorities of the Indigenous Strategic Framework (ISF).
- An annual report for 2023 will be published in 2024.
- The RACP Board, ATSIHC and Māori Health Committee members agreed to a refresh of the ISF to ensure it reflects current health contexts in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Australian Indigenous Doctors Association Conference (November 2023)

- The College was a silver partner of the 2023 AIDA Conference, attended by President Dr Jacqueline Small, 4 Trainees and College staff.
- We surveyed more than 50 people who all talked about needing more workplace support particularly post the “NO Vote” referendum.
- There was much interest in College trainee pathways and support provided.



Dr Simone Raye, President, AIDA & Dr Elke Hull, FRACP (L-R)



Dr Tamara MacKean, FAFPHM



Dr Jacqueline Small, RACP President

Raise the Age

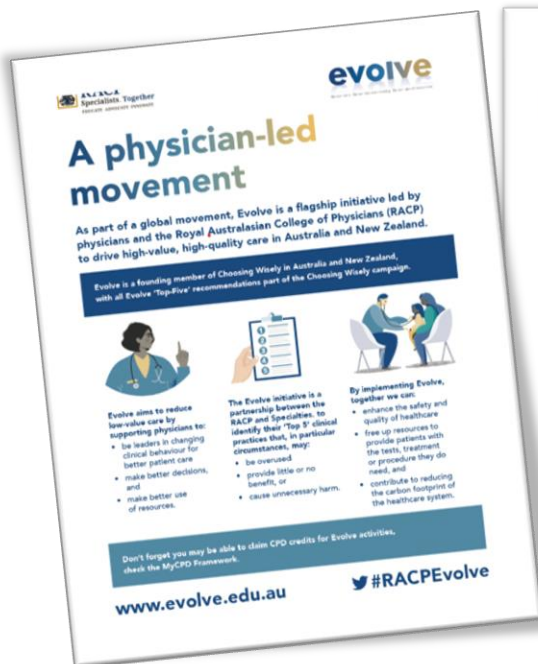
- The Tasmanian Government announced that it would raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years, without exception, by 2029. The RACP published a [media release](#) commending the Tasmanian Government and urging other Governments to follow.
- The RACP also released a [media release](#) expressing disappointment on the failure of the Australian Standing Council of Attorneys General to reach agreement on a national approach to raising the age of criminal responsibility.

2 Healthcare reform

- **Telehealth** - continued advocacy for fit-for-purpose telehealth arrangements through a [submission](#) to the Medicare review into telehealth items, supported by a meeting with the Commonwealth Health Department as well as [media](#). A literature review on phone and video telehealth also supported our advocacy.
- **Preventative and integrated care**
 - advocacy for preventive and integrated care to address diabetes and obesity through a [submission](#) to a Parliamentary inquiry, a hearing evidence from Prof Louise Baur and a [follow up brief](#). College recommendations were reported in the media.
 - At the 3rd Asia Pacific Conference on Integrated Care, the Australian Health Care Reform Working Group Co-Chairs, Dr Tony Mylius and Ms Debra Letica, delivered a community engagement workshop with Dr Viktoria Stein, co-editor in Chief of the International Journal of Integrated Care exploring community involvement and co-design.
- **Junk food and sugary drink advertising** – PCHD President A/Prof Nitin Kapur advocated at a Commonwealth Health Department forum
- **Clinical guidelines** - endorsed two GESA guidelines: *Role of bidirectional endoscopy (same-day upper and lower gastrointestinal endoscopy)* and *Quality upper gastrointestinal endoscopy*.

Evolve

- Promoting [ANZSBT Evolve recommendations](#) at the Blood Meeting 2023.
- Discussed Evolve consumer case studies at a CAG meeting.
- Updating Evolve AChSHM recommendation 4.
- Evolve fact sheet and AChAM recommendations on low-value care were promoted in a 2-page MJA advertisement.



The Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion (ANZSBT) Evolve Top-5 recommendations infographic and MJA advertisement promoting the Australian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM) Evolve Top-5 recommendations

3 Climate

- **National Health and Climate Strategy**
 - Rapid feedback on the draft National Strategy, highlighting the need for increased funding of prevention and low-value care initiatives such as the RACP's Evolve program, prioritising of strengths-based, culturally safe approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and equity, and an increased focus on building strong enablers.
 - Submission on draft actions, emphasising the need to focus on Health in All Policies and whole-of-government approaches.
 - Submission on workforce issues of the National Strategy, urging the Commonwealth to work with states and territories to ensure that the Strategy prioritises the adequate staffing and support for the healthcare workforce.

- Media release on the importance of a National Strategy given recent extreme heat events.
- Welcomed the release of the National Strategy and called for it to be urgently implemented and funded.
- Meeting with Commonwealth Health Department to National Strategy implementation.
- Submission on the Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill on protecting the health of children from adverse impacts of climate change.
- Submission on the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response advocating for a proactive approach to crisis response, focused on prevention, preparedness, and resilience.

4 Populations in Focus

Aged Care

- Aged Care P&A Advisory Group (PAAG) ROC space launched - a new fellow-friendly way of considering inter-specialty health policy issues related to aged care and older people.

Paediatrics and Child Health

- Feedback to the draft Australian National Autism Strategy outlining current RACP positions on support for Autism assessments and support services. The Senate inquiry into attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) published its final report, including many RACP recommendations. The RACP welcomed the report and its recommendations on ADHD assessments and improved supports.



- The RACP's first Youth Advisory Group has been established to support the development of the new RACP position statement on Youth Appropriate Health Care.
- The RACP 2023 Parliamentary Child Health Roundtable report was published, providing an overview of the event and the next steps for ongoing work to address the health and wellbeing issues facing children and young people involved with care and protection services and youth justice settings.
- The RACP's first Youth Advisory Group has been established to support the development of the new RACP position statement on Youth Appropriate Health Care. The first meeting of the Youth Advisory Group will take place in January 2024.

Disability

- [Final report](#) from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review was released. Recommendations from this report and the final report from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability will help guide future RACP advocacy.

Rehabilitation

- AFRM released a [media statement](#) advocating for the Australian Government to consider actions that would support best service delivery and management of patients with long COVID. Dr Jennifer Mann, AFRM President also appeared in an [ABC news story](#) to urge reinvestment into Long COVID clinics

Addiction medicine

- The RACP co-signed an open letter to the NSW Premier and a joint statement from health professionals coordinated by [Unharm](#) calling on the NSW Government to immediately establish a drug checking pilot as an evidence-based harm reduction measure during the festival season.
- Prof Dunlop and NSW AChAM Branch Convenor, Dr Robert Page, met with NSW Minister for Health staff to discuss the planning of the NSW Drug Summit.

COVID-19

- [Submission](#) to the Australian Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry emphasising the need for nationally coordinated pandemic preparedness planning that prioritises the needs of priority populations and those disproportionately affected by health inequities.

Health of workers / silicosis

- Passing of legislation in Australia to establish a National Occupational Respiratory Diseases Registry (the result of sustained RACP / AFOEM advocacy).
- Banning of the use of engineered stone in Australia (aligned with our RACP submission). RACP members were featured strongly in subsequent media.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa NZ Election campaign

- **Waiting times** – as raised in the RACP election statement and following release of Te Whatu Ora clinical performance metrics showing a 46% increase in patients waiting more than four months to see a specialist Aotearoa NZ President Dr Stephen Inns appeared on [The Mike Hosking Breakfast | iHeart](#) radio station and Newstalk ZB radio station talking to the issue of [Longer wait times and sicker patients](#).
- Letter was sent to the incoming Minister of Health, Dr Shane Reti, outlining the priorities in the RACP #HealHealthcare election statement, asking for the retention of Te Aka Whai Ora | Māori Health Authority and inviting the Minister to meet with the RACP.
- A [media release](#) from the RACP on working with the New Government to support an efficient and equitable healthcare system across Aotearoa New Zealand – this was picked up by Stuff media - [RACP Doctors urge new government to retrain Te Aka Whai Ora Māori Health Authority](#).

Smokefree

- A RACP [media release](#) urged the incoming government to reconsider its planned repeal of Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act, was sent to Associate Minister of Health Casey Costello, now responsible for the Smokefree portfolio.
- RACP were signatories to a joint open letter to the government released by Health Coalition Aotearoa and [published in the NZ Herald](#) on 6 December 2023 in opposition to the decision to repeal the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act.

Silicosis

- Letters asking for urgent government action on Silicosis were sent to Aotearoa New Zealand's Prime Minister, Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Leader of the Opposition and co-Leaders of the Green Party. This called for a ban on the use of engineered stone and an official registry of people with workplace silica dust exposure.

State and Territory Advocacy

Northern Territory

- RACP [submission](#) to the [Senate Inquiry into the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct](#), emphasising health harms of fossil fuels.
- The Northern Territory Committee wrote to the CPAC Chair, expressing strong support for reviewing and updating the College Climate Change and Health position statement.
- Planning engagement with the Northern Territory Government consultation process for developing a framework for Voluntary Assisted Dying.

NSW/ACT

- **Healthcare funding inquiry**
 - RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small, College Dean A/Prof Kudzai Kanhutu, Chair of the NSW/ACT Committee Dr Sayontonee Ghosh and P&A Executive General Manager Nicola Lewis met with Commissioner of the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding. Key matters raised included: supporting the specialist workforce; a culture of wellbeing for physicians and trainee physicians; delivering appropriate and sustainable Urgent Care Clinics and creating a climate-ready healthcare system.
 - The RACP [Submission](#) expanded on these issues and also covered funding for preventive healthcare; issues for the rural, regional and remote workforce, improving the integration of healthcare delivery; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health; commit to achieving net zero emissions by 2040; strengthen investment in the early years of life; improved access to quality aged and disability care; a health-based approach to drug policy reform and expanding telehealth specialist services.

South Australia

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

Tasmania

- [Submission](#) to the to the Select Committee on Transfer of Care Delays (Ambulance Ramping) in Tasmania, focusing on broader access to care and hospital discharge issues that contribute to hospital admission issues.

Victoria

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

Queensland

- RACP wrote to the Queensland Minister for Health seeking an update about the implementation of the recommendations of the [report](#) (2020) into the quality of health services provided by Bamaga Hospital.
- The RACP wrote to the Queensland Attorney General reiterating the RACP's position on raising the age in the context of Queensland having no plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility.

Western Australia

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

Submissions

October

- [RACP Submission to the Senate Autism Select Committee](#)
- [Submission on the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper](#)

November

- [Climate Change Amendment \(Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity\) Bill submission to Senate inquiry](#)
- [RACP submission Middle Arm Industrial Precinct Senate Inquiry](#)
- [MBS Review Advisory Committee's \(MRAC\) post implementation review of MBS Telehealth items](#)

December

- [RACP submission to the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry](#)

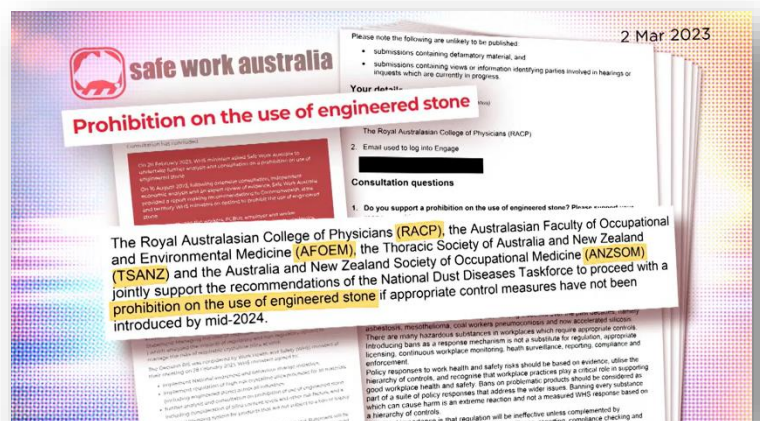
Media and advocacy

October media releases:

- [The RACP expresses sadness after Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament fails to pass | 24 October 2023](#)
- [Physicians support total ban of engineered stone, but urges more reform required | 28 October 2023](#)

October Media coverage:

- [Pill-testing lag dubbed fatal 'distraction', | 27 October 2023](#)
- [Joint health and medical groups push for NSW drug-testing trial | NT News | 27 October 2023](#)
- Featuring Dr Graeme Edwards, RACP silicosis expert on [Safe Work Australia report on whether to prohibit the use of engineered stone: Media Watch 9 October 2023](#); [Silicosis: Caesarstone launches advertising blitz over potential benchtop ban \(smh.com.au\) 17 October 2023](#); [Silicosis explained \(thenewdaily.com.au\) 25 October 2023](#); [What is silicosis and how is it caused? \(thenewdaily.com.au\) 25 October](#)



2023; [Engineered stone: Safe Work Australia report released \(smh.com.au\) 27 October 2023](#); [Engineered stone ban needed to protect workers from silicosis, Safe Work Australia report says - ABC News 27 October 2023](#); [Engineered stone: Safe Work Australia report released \(smh.com.au\) 27 October 2023](#). Radio and television commentary was given to ABC National Health Report, ABC Southern Drive program (Gold Coast).

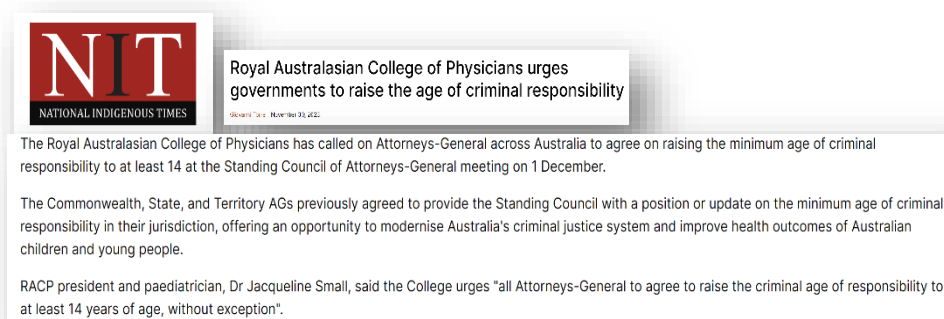
- [Life altering condition thousands of Aussies might have without knowing | Yahoo News, 28 October 2023](#)
- [Joint health and medical groups push for NSW drug-testing trial | The Australian, 26 October 2023](#)

November media releases:

- [Physicians extremely disappointed in plans to repeal smokefree legislation | 30 November 2023](#)
- [Governments must listen to child health experts - Physicians call for national agreement to raise the age of criminal responsibility | 30 November 2023](#)
- [RACP looks forward to working with new government to support an efficient and equitable healthcare system across Aotearoa New Zealand | 27 November 2023](#)
- [RACP welcomes final report from Disability Royal Commission | 17 November 2023](#)
- ['National dust disease registry will save lives' - physicians welcome new legislation | 16 November 2023](#)
- [Physicians welcome landmark ADHD Senate Inquiry report and urge the Federal Government to adopt recommendations | 13 November 2023](#)
- [Initial telehealth consults key to delivering more equitable specialist care and easing service strain | 13 November 2023](#)

November media coverage:

- RACP featured on Livenews.co.nz, [Physicians extremely disappointed in NZ Gov plans to repeal smokefree legislation | 30 November 2023](#)
- RACP featured in the National Indigenous Times, [Royal Australasian College of Physicians urges governments to raise the age of criminal responsibility | 30 November 2023](#)
- RACP Aotearoa New Zealand President, Dr Stephen Inns, featured in an [article](#) urging the Government to retain Te Aka Whai Ora Māori Health Authority | 29 November 2023



- RACP featured on Livenews.co.nz, [Physicians extremely disappointed in NZ Gov plans to repeal smokefree legislation](#) | 30 November 2023
- RACP featured in the National Indigenous Times, [Royal Australasian College of Physicians urges governments to raise the age of criminal responsibility](#) | 30 November 2023
- RACP Aotearoa New Zealand President, Dr Stephen Inns, featured in an [article](#) urging the Government to retain Te Aka Whai Ora Māori Health Authority | 29 November 2023

December media releases:

- [Ban on engineered stone welcomed by physicians](#) | 13 December 2023
- [Long COVID patients suffering as clinics shut down across the country](#) | 12 December 2023
- [Physicians commend Tasmanian Government for announcing it will raise the age of criminal responsibility](#) | 8 December 2023
- [World first research examining whether rotavirus vaccine booster will reduce hospitalisation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children](#) | 6 December 2023
- [Physicians disappointed - failure to agree on raising the age of criminal responsibility is a missed opportunity](#) | 4 December 2023
- [Physicians welcome National Health and Climate Strategy and call for its urgent implementation](#) | 4 December 2023

December media coverage:

- RACP supports decision that [Engineered stone products linked to silicosis be banned in Australia](#) | The New Daily | 13 December 2023
- Dr Jenny Mann, AFRM President appeared in an [ABC news story](#) to urge reinvestment into Long COVID clinics | 12 December 2023
- [Governments accused of 'sitting on their hands' as 10-year-olds are treated as criminals](#) | SBS | 12 December 2023

Stakeholder meetings

Quick Overview October to December 2023

Total activities: 20

Activity Type	Stakeholder	Engagement Type
Meetings 20	State/Territory Government	NSW Health 2
	Medical Body	Commonwealth Department of Health & Aged Care 3
	Government Body	Medicare 1
	Other	Other 14

October to December

Meetings with health sector stakeholders continued through October to December, discussing shared interests and establishing ongoing engagement.

- Commonwealth Health
- Medicare Integrity Taskforce
- NSW Health
- Federal AMA
- RACGP
- RANZCP
- RANZCO
- ANZCA
- ACD
- Australian Physiotherapy Association
- Occupational Therapy Australia
- Grattan Institute
- Public Health Association of Australia
- College of Intensive Care Medicine (CICM)
- Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA)
- PHN Cooperative
- AVANT
- ACCPA

Government relations

October

- Meeting with Commissioner Richard Beasley & Patrick Mullane, Special Counsel from the NSW Health Funding Commission & President Dr Jacqueline Small, Dr Sayontonee Ghosh, Chair NSW Committee, Kudzai Kanhutu, EGM Office of the Dean & Nicola Lewis, EGM P&A to discuss the Inquiry into Healthcare Funding, to which the RACP has prepared a submission.
- Meeting with Ms Louise Riley, A/Secretary, MBS Policy & Reviews Branch, Department of Health & Aged Care with Nicola Lewis, EGM P&A to discuss telephone telehealth extended items and ongoing MBS engagement.

December

- Meeting with Dr Kerry Chant, Chief Health Officer, Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health and President Dr Jacqueline Small, Timothy Bowen, Acting EGM P&A and Lee Bradfield, Manager – Indigenous Strategy focusing on First Nations Health, Healthcare Workforce, Models of Care, Preventative Health, Alcohol and other Drugs, Long COVID and Climate Change and Health.

Your feedback

We understand the importance of feedback. If you have the time, please complete a 2-question survey to help us understand if this is a helpful report and any improvements.

[Complete survey here](#)

P&A Team

For more information, contact the Policy and Advocacy Team
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