



## PORTFOLIO / SERVICE

Histology Laboratory, Anatomical Pathology Department RNSH

## TITLE

Increased staffing needs for department of Anatomical Pathology at RNS

- For information  
 For discussion  
 For approval /endorsement

## BACKGROUND

According to the terms of the workload review as outlined in the memo dated 22 February 2023; entitled **2023 UPDATE and Clarification on the Anatomical Pathology Relative Workload Review** NSWHP explicitly informed all staff that "This Review is a snapshot of the Lab's current activity" (my underline).

By email 12.4.2023, concerns were expressed that a workload review based solely on data collected from financial years 20/21 and 21/22, which were severely affected by COVID-19, would not just be inaccurate and non-representative but would be *known to be inaccurate and non-representative* by those conducting the review and therefore inconsistent with the stated intention of the review to assess that laboratory's current activity.

By return email 12.4.2023, it was stated that "*The workload audit is focusing on the 20/21 and 21/22 financial years and we are collecting full figures for those years only as they are the last 2 complete financial years with full data available. If there have been significant changes since then we can hear about them during our visit*"

The purpose of this briefing document is to:

1. Document the reasons why an audit based on 20/21 and 21/22 data is not representative of current workload in the department of anatomical pathology at RNSH
2. Provided detailed information on other factors of direct relevance to the workforce / workload audit including the amount of excess annual leave and TESL entitlements and the need for backfill to enable staffing.

## PURPOSE

To transparently document in the increased in workload in calendar year 2023 compared to covid affected financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

To transparently document the excess annual leave and TESL entitlements of the department to be considered when recommending future staffing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1)

The RTU should first review whether staffing levels were appropriate for financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 based on data already provided. Having conducted that stage of the review any recommendation of staffing data based on this data should be increased by more than 15% to account for increased workload.

2)

The staffing recommendation should also consider the 2288 days of TESL entitlements and 4613.63 hrs (577 days) of annual leave entitlements of the pathologists including 2117.142 hrs (265 days) accumulated by pathologists considered to have 'excess annual leave'.

3)

This increase in staffing should be across the department. That is it should include both medical (staff specialists and registrars) and scientific staff. The increased staffing should be implemented as a matter of urgency.



4) When assessing medical staffing levels, the review should consider the impact of RNS site not being offered additional 'cut up scientists'. NSW Health should publish the assessment process and reasoning behind the prior decision for RNS not to offer additional cut-up scientists.

## KEY ISSUES

### 1.

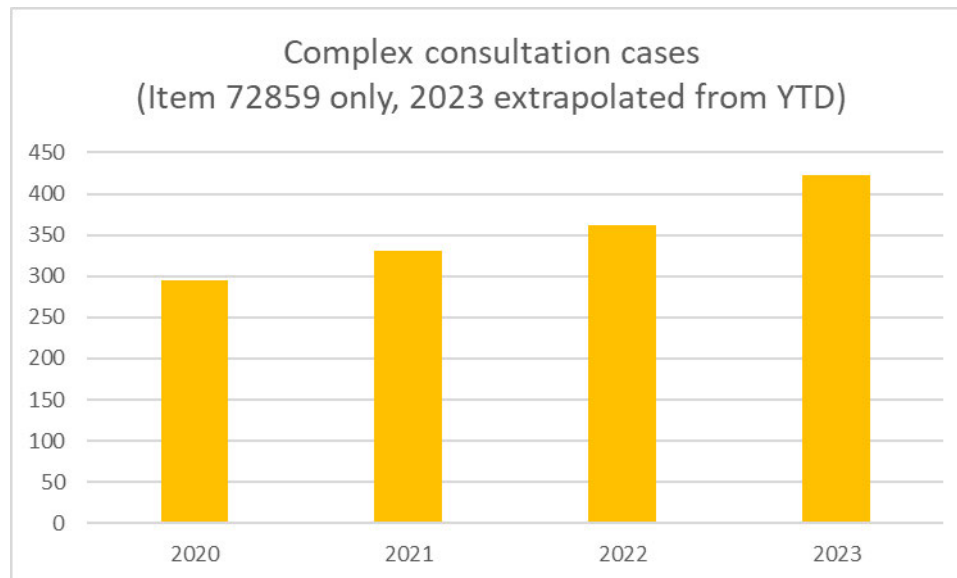
The RTU metric is based on data collected from financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22. This does not reflect the current workload in 2023 which has significantly increased after COVID.

All data suggests that there has been a greater than 10% increase in workload (data includes Surg Path cases only and does not include consultation cases, renal biopsies and cytology)

Month	2020	2021	2022	2023	Av 20/21 and 21/22	Increase in 2023
January	1803	1681	1496	1939	1588.5	22%
February	2485	2427	2237	2669	2332	14.50%
March	2172	2925	2787	3003	2856	5%
April	1058	2491	2091	2384	2291	4%
May	1774	2557	2529	2962	2543	16.40%
<b>Total increase in workload 2023 vs 20/21 &amp; 21.23 YTD</b>				<b>12957</b>	<b>11610.5</b>	<b>11.60%</b>

### 2.

Consultation cases are increasing at a similar rate and this data has also not been captured in the workforce metric. Consultation cases are increasing at a greater rate than general surgical pathology. That is, based on year to date data consultation cases have increased by 20% compared to previous years.



### 3.

The cytology workload is increased by a greater number.

An audit conducted on 8 June 2023, revealed 2609 cytology cases for the YTD.

An audit conducted on 8 June 2022, revealed 2200 cytology cases for the YTD

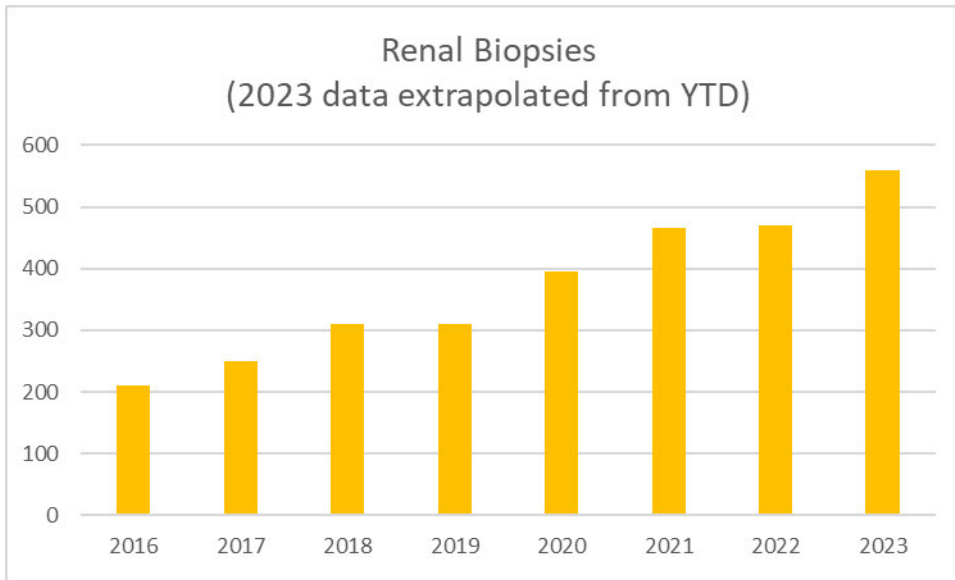
An audit conducted on 8 June 2021, revealed 2455 cytology cases for the YTD



This indicates an increase in workload in 2023 of 18.6% compared to previous calendar year and an increase of 12.1% on the combined years 2022 and 2021.

4.

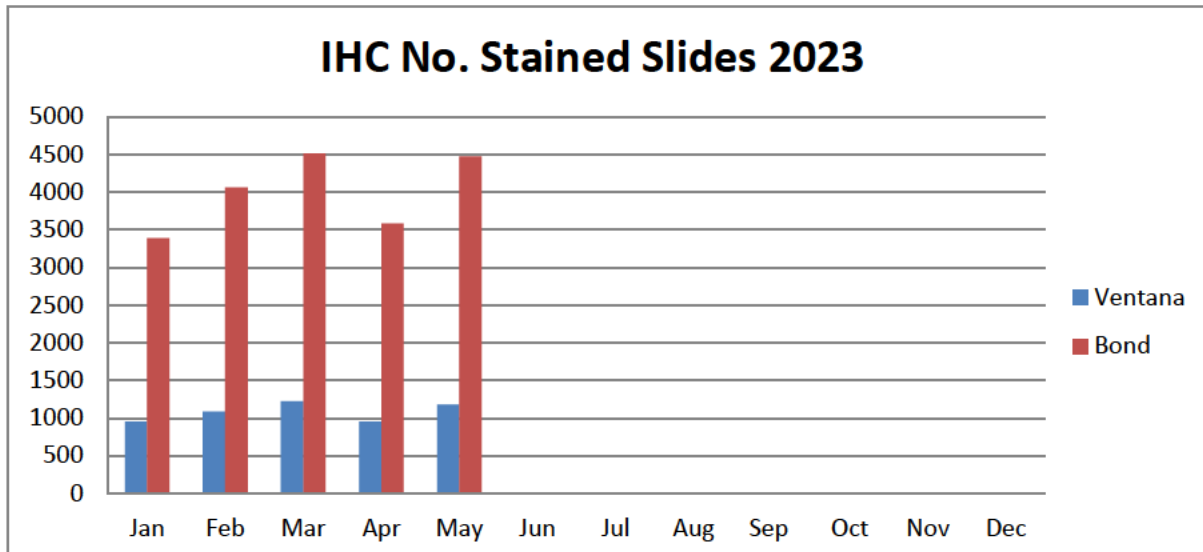
Workload metrics do not reflect the increased in specialty referral bias. Royal North Shore hospital is unique in that it receives high complexity renal biopsy from external services (GOSFROD, SAN, LISMORE). Renal biopsies are currently only captured as level 5 but accepted to me more time consuming. However a statewide metric based on total number of level 5 cases does not capture this referral bias. In addition renal biopsies are increasing at a greater rate. The total number of renal biopsies in calendar year 2022 was 438 and by the end of May 2023 it is 213. Extrapolating this rate of increase, there would be an expected



5. Work complexity as evidence by number of IHC stains performed have increased by 20 to 30% per month, every month this year compared to 2022.

**IHC No. of Stained Slides 2023**

2023	Ventana	Bond	Monthly Total 2023	Monthly Total 2022	comparison 22/23 (%)
Jan	951	3388	4339	3591	↑20.83
Feb	1090	4065	5155	4035	↑27.76
Mar	1224	4516	5740	4421	↑29.83
Apr	955	3584	4539	3509	↑29.35
May	1180	4478	5658	4449	↑27.17
Jun				4799	
Jul				4363	
Aug				5195	
Sep				4863	
Oct				4801	
Nov				5434	
Dec				5071	
<b>Yearly Total</b>	5400	20031		54531	
<b>Monthly Ave</b>	1080	4006		4544.25	



6. The average number of blocks processed per day in 2021/22 was 550. In 2023 based on a month by month analysis to date the average number of blocks is 600 – ie: an increase of 10%. The nature of cases (discussed above and requiring levels and IHC etc) has lead to a much greater than 10% increase in slides cut by that lab and much greater than 10% increase in the number of slides examined by pathologists

7. The North Shore Private Hospital contract expires 30 June 2024. Maintaining this contract is integral to the financial viability of the RNS site of NSWHP. If this contract is jeopardized by poor turn around time and performance, there will be an overall significant net financial burden.

8. NSWHP SLT have endorsed the acquisition of work from the new WYVERN private hospital which will open 2024. Any current workload metric should be adjusted to include work from this external institution to come on line during the term of the review. This includes a requirement to provide a frozen section service for Wyvern private hospital (located at Terry Hills).

9. For reasons that have not been made clear to the department, RNS was not chosen as a site for the newly created positions of cut-up scientists which were provided to many other peer laboratories. Assessment of medical (registrar and pathologist positions) should be adjusted to reflect the lack of dedicated cut up scientists employed at other sites.

10. Excess leave (figures audited Sunday 11 June)

i)

Currently the 12.9 FTE staff specialists have accumulated 2288 of TESL leave. It is an award requirement that TESL leave will not be 'unreasonable denied' however with the current staffing in the department it is not possible to staff the department and facilitate this leave.

ii)

Currently the 12.9FTE staff specialists have 4613.63 hrs (577 days) of annual leave. Even when restricted only to the staff specialists who have been flagged as having excess annual leave (highlighted in summary below) there are 2117.142 hrs (265 days) of excess annual leave.



## LEAVE SNAPSHOT FOR PATHOLOGISTS UNDERTAKEN 11 June 2023

Staff Specialist	FTE	Annual Leave (hrs)	Annual leave (no loading, hrs)	ProRata (hrs)	Pro-rata no loading (hrs)	TESL (days)
<b>Total leave</b>		<b>2431.508</b>	<b>1354.721</b>	<b>655.274</b>	<b>172.13</b>	<b>2288</b>
Excess annual leave in hrs		2117.142				
Excess annual leave in days		265 days				

### IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- **On NSW Health Pathology services:** NSWHP SLT must keep their commitment for the RTU workload audit to be based on 'current' workload
- **On patients:** Enable to receive the accurate results in a timely manner
- **On staff:** Enable to reduce the stress from high workload with better workflow. NSWHP has a workplace obligation to make it possible for staff to take the leave (including TESL) leave requirements
- **On finances:** Failure to maintain the NSP external contract will have a severe impact on NSWHP finances.
- **Other implications:**

### CONSULTATION:

- Kimiko Blendell – Divisional Manager, Anatomical Pathology Department RNSH, NSW Health Pathology North
- Nathan Hall – In-charge of Section, Senior Scientific Officer, Histology Laboratory, Anatomical Pathology Department RNSH, NSW Health Pathology North
- Adele Clarkson – In charge of Immunohistochemistry

**Author:** Anthony Gill, HOD Anatomical Pathology Department RNSH, NSW Health Pathology North

**Phone:** [REDACTED]

**Date:** 12.6.23