



Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding

Submission Number: 93
Name: Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
Date Received: 2/11/2023

31 October 2023

To: Patrick Mullane
Via Email: submissions.HFI@specialcommission.nsw.gov.au

Dear Patrick,

RE: Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding

Thank you for asking The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (The College) to respond to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding. The College is the leading organisation providing training for pathologists and senior scientists and guiding professional practice and quality of pathology services in Australia. The College advocates for a robust public and private pathology sector to serve the communities of Australia. In order for the NSW public pathology system to continue to provide excellent services to the NSW community, RCPA has a number of considerations for the Commission.

The College remains concerned that there are inadequate numbers of Pathologists being trained in NSW to meet workforce demand. Our workforce review in 2018 noted that 15% of the New South Wales workforce were aged 65 years and over with an expected 101 practitioners retiring in the next five years. This coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, the increased complexity in reporting requirements, and the growing demand for genetic testing will result in a pathology workforce that cannot meet the needs of an aging NSW population. In NSW this will particularly affect Chemical Pathologists, Forensic Pathologists, Neuropathologists, Anatomical Pathologists and Genetic Pathologists.

There is a global shortage of Pathologists, so there needs to be an investment in additional trainee positions to grow New South Wales own workforce. Additionally, there are successful strategies being adopted to help combat this shortage and encourage medical students and junior doctors to consider a career in Pathology. Funding NSW Health Pathology to provide junior medical officer rotations in Pathology is one example of exposing interested medical students to the profession. Further support for these would be appropriate.

Scientists work hand in hand with Pathologists to deliver high-quality pathology services to the people of New South Wales. The College has a Faculty of Science which trains senior scientists to undertake this important work. NSW Pathology currently funds some training positions for this, but more funding is required.

Similarly, enhancing funding to innovate and investigate emerging technologies (such as digital pathology) to assist Pathologists in their roles is critical to ensuring the pathology sector can continue to deliver high-quality, and timely care.

If you have any questions, please contact me 

Sincerely,



Dr Debra Graves OAM
Chief Executive Officer