

## Media Release

11 April 2011

### **'Pathology funding agreement promises stability' - RCPA**

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia welcomes today's announcement of an agreement between the Federal Government and the pathology sector as a means of bringing some stability back into the profession.

President of the College, Associate Professor Paul McKenzie, says the pathology sector has been under severe pressure in recent years due to funding cuts and changes to Government regulations.

"This pressure has begun to affect the quality of the services that could be provided. We hope this agreement will stabilise the profession and allow it to continue serving the Australian community which depends on pathology services as the foundation for medical care.

"We are pleased that the agreement goes beyond the issue of funding and encompasses other initiatives which will support quality services and the sustainability of the profession," says A/Prof McKenzie.

The RCPA is extremely pleased that the Government accepted the College's advice for the need to develop a National Pathology Framework that will enable the profession and Government to better plan the provision of pathology services to the Australian people. The Framework will take a broader view of pathology services including safety, quality control and the workforce in the pathology sector as well as informing future policy development in this important area.

A/Prof. McKenzie says the College is delighted that the Government and the other parties to the Agreement are committed to working together to maintain a sustainable and expert pathologist and scientific workforce.

"This long range planning is vital to maintaining high quality and safe pathology services into the future," he says.

All parties to the pathology funding agreement have agreed to work through a central body to be known as the Pathology Agreement Advisory Committee (PAAC), to administer the Agreement and oversee the development of the National Pathology Framework. There will also be a Workforce Advisory Committee which will work with Health Workforce Australia to conduct research on pathology staff numbers and workloads. This study is expected to be completed by June 2012.

A/Prof. McKenzie says the College is also very happy that the Agreement acknowledges the need for Government to develop a better way to approach the funding of genetic services.

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia acknowledges that today's Agreement between the Federal Government and the Pathology sector places limits on the funding for growth in pathology testing.

"To ensure that growth is contained, it will be essential for the pathology profession to work effectively with doctors who request pathology tests for their patients. The College will be working with the wider medical community to develop electronic decision support systems for pathology requesting," says A/Prof. McKenzie.

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