

17 January 2008

Mrs Cheryl Samuels  
Standing Committee on Broadband in  
Rural and Regional Communities  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mrs Samuels,

Thank you for asking the RCPA to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Broadband in Rural and Regional Communities. I apologise for the delay with this reply.

The College understands that the Commonwealth sponsors a program called Broadband for Health, which supports Broadband Internet access for rural GPs and Aboriginal Community-Controlled healthcare organizations.

The College would therefore like to suggest the Standing Committee consider:

- Seeking confirmation from the Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing of the specifications of the Broadband for Health program (it is probably available on their website), and
- For the NSW Standing Committee make representations to the Commonwealth to have diagnostic services included in the Broadband for Health program.

There is no need for duplication of activities in this field.

The College would like to offer several comments on the subject. Broadband has the potential to either unite or permanently divide the hospitals and GPs in rural and regional Australia. The elaborate security arrangements that need to be put in place for health care currently lock a lot of GPs out of the NSW Health system. If the NSW Health Electronic Medical Record is to make genuine progress in providing good two-way flow of information between NSW Health facilities and GPs in their private rooms, the security systems and internet connections need to be made more welcoming to the GPs.

The same comments apply to rural pathology providers, public and private. In towns served by both public and private pathology providers, please make sure that patient results are available for GPs and hospital-based specialists by both providers, with compatible systems and appropriate security.

From a Pathology perspective is need for high quality video-teleconferencing for multidisciplinary care and consulting with experts in major centres - eg for management of rare or difficult cancers, second opinions.

I enclose a letter about our Telepathology Project to help support rural pathologists and scientists which I trust assist in improving rural access to improved internet facilities.

Sincerely,



Dr Debra Graves  
**Chief Executive Officer**