

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVISION OF  
HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY  
GROWTH REGION**

**Organisation:** Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)  
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**ANZCA**  
FPM

April 24, 2020

Portfolio Committee 2 – Health  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Via submission portal

Dear Committee members

**Inquiry into the current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region**

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), including the Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM), is committed to the highest standards of clinical practice in the fields of anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine. As one of the largest medical colleges in Australia, ANZCA is responsible for the postgraduate training programs of anaesthetists and specialist pain medicine physicians, in addition to promoting best practice and ongoing continuous improvement that contributes to a high quality health system.

ANZCA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region. We acknowledge that broad healthcare system planning and sustainability considers the interactions and interdependence across the entire New South Wales healthcare system. Thus, our intention with this submission is to highlight some current and future challenges in the training, and provision, of paediatric anaesthesia in the South-West Sydney Growth Region and its surrounds.

ANZCA wishes to make the following comments in addressing three of the inquiry's terms of reference.

**ToR (a): *An analysis of the planning systems and projections used by NSW Health in making provision for health services to meet the needs of population growth and new suburbs in the South-West Sydney Growth Region***

ANZCA is constantly reviewing and evaluating training arrangements, planning and workforce projections around the nation. The college retains substantial knowledge and expertise in these areas and holds all data on anaesthesia trainees in Australia. The college would be pleased to provide advice in future consultations regarding planning for health services in the Growth Region and its surrounds. A particular challenge in New South Wales in relation to anaesthesia workforce training is the inter-hospital rotations that are required to meet the core elements of the specialist training program. Engaging with the multiple hospital networks to ensure a workforce that is available at all times whilst balancing the training requirements is something that requires complex scheduling and logistics.

**ToR (f): *A comparison of the staffing allocations at health services and hospitals between the South-West Sydney Growth Region and other local health districts across metropolitan Sydney since 2011***

There are currently three dedicated paediatric hospital sites in New South Wales, these being the Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick, the Children's Hospital at Westmead and John Hunter Children's Hospital in Newcastle. Relevant to this inquiry is the issues regarding staffing allocations and training at the Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) in particular. The Children's Hospital at Westmead was formed as an amalgamation of Royal Alexandria Hospital for Children at Camperdown (Central Sydney) and Westmead's paediatric services. From the outset, the Children's Hospital at Westmead has operated above predicted service levels, aggravated by the rapid population growth in the South-Western Sydney area.

There is no sub-specialisation in anaesthesia training, that is, all anaesthesia registrars must successfully complete a broad training curriculum that includes a number of specialised study units (SSU). Some of these, such as paediatric anaesthesia, can only be completed within satisfactory timeframes at large tertiary teaching hospitals. Hence, most anaesthesia registrars in New South Wales are required to undertake a rotation of a minimum of four months at one of the three children's hospitals in the state to complete their paediatric anaesthesia SSU.

Due to numerous factors, including budgetary constraints, the Children's Hospital at Westmead has not been able to increase its paediatric anaesthesia registrar complement. Financially, it is unable to provide rotations for paediatric training positions despite the excellent training opportunities that the site has to offer. This has been an emerging problem, with registrar numbers not increased in the past decade even though the demand for services has increased significantly. This imbalance is likely to worsen into the future, aggravated by factors such as:

- Rapid population growth in the southern and western Sydney areas.
- Increases in designated training capacity in the regional and rural sector.
- Increases in trainee numbers supporting safer working hours.

At current, the Children's Hospital at Westmead hosts 10 to 11 registrars at any one time, with each spending 4 to 6 months at the hospital, resulting in around 30 registrars rotating through the site each year. As noted, there has been no significant increase to these arrangements over the past decade and it is expected that two major expansions opening in the next 18 months, including a new emergency department will require a further 7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) trainees, for a total of 15 to 16 extra registrars. In addition, a new paediatric building is expected to be opened at the Children's Hospital at Westmead in 2025, which will double theatre capacity and necessitate a further 30 registrars, compared to the current 10. Evidently, there is an urgent need to increase trainee and registrar complements in order to cope with the growing demand in the short-medium term future.

The provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region has the potential to help address these concerns in the medium to long term future, provided the policy settings consider the growing interconnectedness and interdependence between hospitals across the broad New South Wales health system. Without due consideration, growing hospitals in the South-West Sydney Growth Region and its surrounds will place additional training pressures on tertiary hospitals such as the Children's Hospital at Westmead. As noted above, all anaesthesia registrars in New South Wales will need to undertake a rotation through one of the three children's hospitals.

Further, over the past two years the college has successfully increased the number of registrars undertaking their training in regional New South Wales. Utilising the Commonwealth Department

of Health Specialist Training Program – Integrated Rural Training Pipeline (STP-IRTP) funding, a number of anaesthesia registrars are now completing a majority of their training in locations such as Wagga Wagga, Lismore and Albury. However, these trainees are again required to undertake rotations through one of the three children's hospitals to complete their paediatric anaesthesia SSU. This places further pressure on hospitals such as the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

Planning for the provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region needs to consider this anaesthesia training issue and recognise that in order to support service provision in the area, as well as regional New South Wales, there is an impact 'upstream' in the three children's hospitals.

**ToR (g): *An investigation into the health workforce planning needs of the South-West Sydney Growth Region to accommodate population growth to 2050***

As noted in our response to the previous terms of reference, the pressures on paediatric anaesthesia training in New South Wales requires a long-term solution. We would like to reiterate the need to consider the broader issues of anaesthesia training throughout the state in considering the health workforce planning needs of the South-West Sydney Growth Region. The interconnectedness and interdependence of many of the hospitals in specialist training programs means that health workforce issues beyond the Growth Region must be considered in planning.

In conclusion, the main concerns ANZCA wishes to convey are:

- That limitations in the paediatric anaesthesia training capacity and registrar complement at hospitals surrounding the South-West Sydney Growth Region, in particular the Children's Hospital at Westmead, are placing significant constraints on training and service provision.
- Without considering and addressing the above, growing hospitals in the Growth Region (in addition to increased training in regional New South Wales) risks placing additional training pressures and increased demand for services at tertiary hospitals such as the Children's Hospital at Westmead.
- That health services planning in the Growth Region consider the sustainability of training arrangements and service provision for specialist services, particularly paediatric anaesthesia, among surrounding hospitals.

The college recognises that training and workforce planning for health services is a multifaceted challenge, with an array of stakeholders required to ensure these types of issues can be addressed. As such, we would like to take this opportunity to ensure the Committee that the college is ready and willing to assist in addressing these issues.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Simon Ford**

Chair, New South Wales Regional Committee  
Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists